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**National Institute for Health Care Management Foundation**  
**Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health Update**  
**March 2009**  
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**NIHCM Foundation Activities**  
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NIHCM Foundation's newest paper, [*Recommended Adolescent Health Care Utilization: How Social Marketing Can Help*](#), by W. Douglas Evans, PhD, The George Washington University School of Public Health and Health Services, is now available. Fewer than half of adolescents receive their recommended annual preventive health care visit, which is cause for concern since adolescence is a critical time period when many risky behaviors begin to develop. This underutilization of services yields missed opportunities for prevention, early detection and treatment. Health plans are assessed on their rates of adolescent well-care visits through HEDIS scores, yet many are struggling to find effective strategies to improve these rates. Social marketing, the use of commercial marketing strategies to promote socially beneficial ideas, attitudes and behaviors, can help increase utilization of services and promote healthy behaviors among adolescents. With the aim of informing and facilitating discussions on how health plans and health care providers can craft targeted messages for adolescents, as well as how they can utilize new media and technologies, the issue brief explores potential future applications of social marketing for health plans, providers and adolescents.

In February NIHCM Foundation published a new report, [*Increasing Access to Health Insurance for Children and Families: Innovative Health Plan Outreach and Enrollment Efforts*](#). Providing health insurance for children and families continues to challenge the nation as over eight million children remain uninsured. Public and private sector efforts to provide health insurance to children will be critical during these difficult economic times, as more children become uninsured as their parents lose employer-based insurance and as state budget deficits require cuts in funding for outreach efforts to enroll eligible but uninsured children. This issue brief examines health plan efforts to increase enrollment in Medicaid and CHIP. With the aim of informing and facilitating discussions on how the various sectors of the health care system can work together to ensure access to care, the brief also examines private insurance coverage options for individuals and the increasing role of health plan philanthropic foundations in

efforts to promote access to insurance.

In February NIHCM Foundation published "[Expert Voices: Life Course Health Development](#)," the latest edition in the *Expert Voices* series. Written by Neal Halfon, Director, UCLA Center for Healthier Children, Families, and Communities, and Professor of Pediatrics, Health Sciences and Public Policy, the essay examines the Life Course Health Development (LCHD) model, which emphasizes the important of early intervention during sensitive developmental periods in a child's life as a means to helping the child attain maximum potential health throughout his lifespan. These interventions include appropriate family support and early learning opportunities in addition to appropriate health care, with all interventions integrated across sectors and over time. While most other developed countries support their children in this way, the U.S. has lagged behind. Current national reform activities offer an opportunity to begin redressing this shortcoming. This *Expert Voices* as well as others in the series are available at http://www.nihcm.org/publications/expert_voices.

NIHCM Foundation is currently working with expert authors on a paper that will provide an overview of the current state of early identification and treatment of mental health in pediatric primary care and will identify strategies for health care professionals, including health plans, to improve and support the delivery of mental health care in primary care settings. This report will be available in the spring.

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**Organizational Innovations to Support MCH**  
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On March 11 President Obama signed legislation to create a [White House Council on Women and Girls](#). The council, chaired by White House Senior Advisor Valerie Jarrett, and with White House Director of Public Liaison Tina Tchen serving as Executive Director, is made up of Cabinet Secretaries and other White House staff. The Council will evaluate how every government agency is addressing the needs of women. During its first year, the Council will develop policies to ensure agencies are working to improve the economic status of women, promoting a work-family balance, preventing violence against women, building healthy families and improving women's health care. Read more about the White House Council on Women and Girls at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/09/03/11/Opportunities-their-mothers-and-grandmothers-and-great-grandmothers-never-dreamed-of/>.

Funded by the [National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research](#) (NIDRR) in the U.S. Department of Education, a new [National Center for Parents with Disabilities and their Families](#) has been established at the nonprofit Through the Looking Glass. The Center aims to improve the quality of life among parents with disabilities and their families by focusing on four critical areas that impact parents with disabilities: custody, family roles and personal assistance; paratransit; and, intervention with parents with cognitive disabilities and their children. More information about the Center is available at <http://lookingglass.org/ncpd/index.php>.

Comprised of members from 12 different Federal agencies, the [Interagency Working Group on Youth Programs](#) has launched a new website, findyouthinfo.org, to provide tools and other

resources to help youth-serving organizations and community partnerships. Resources include: elements of effective partnerships, including strategies for engaging youth; community assessment tools; mapping tools that generate maps of local and Federal youth programs; a searchable database of evidence-based programs to address risk and protective factors in youth; and high-quality Federal publications and web links on youth issues. Strategic planning tools and interactive resources to support community partnerships will be added in the upcoming months. Learn more about the website at <http://www.findyouthinfo.org/AboutUs.aspx>.

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## Promoting Oral Health

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February was Children's Dental Health Month. In preparation, the [National Maternal and Child Oral Health Resource Center](#) and the [Maternal and Child Health Library](#) at Georgetown University teamed up to release an electronic guide to oral health for infants, children, adolescents and pregnant women. The knowledge path contains information on effective programs as well as current research and policy to improve access to and the quality of oral health care. The knowledge path contains resources for professionals and consumers as well as information on specific oral health topics, such as dental sealants, early childhood caries, fluoride varnish, school-based care, and special health care needs. The knowledge path is available at <http://www.mchoralhealth.org/knwpathoralhealth.html>.

The [National Academy for State Health Policy](#) published a new report, *Increasing Access to Dental Care in Medicaid: Targeted Programs for Four Populations*. It is widely acknowledged that those insured by public programs have poor access to oral health care and low utilization of oral health services. However, specific groups of Medicaid enrollees, including young children, pregnant women, people with developmental disabilities, and people living in rural areas, face particular oral health challenges and could benefit from targeted interventions. This report describes current state strategies to address the oral health needs of these groups. Strategies include enhancing the training of dental professionals, broadening service delivery sites, enhancing state contracts, and using existing safety net pathways. Access the full report at http://www.nashp.org/files/Dental_Reimbursements.pdf.

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## Reducing Childhood Obesity

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The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC), [National Institutes of Health](#) (NIH) and the [Robert Wood Johnson Foundation](#) (RWJF) are joining forces to create the [National Collaborative on Childhood Obesity Research](#) (NCCOR). By improving the efficiency and effectiveness of childhood obesity studies, NCCOR aims to reduce the rates of obesity and overweight among U.S. youth. The populations and communities in which obesity rates are highest or growing the fastest, including African Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans, Asian/Pacific Islanders and children living in low income communities, will get particular consideration. The collaborative will focus on four priority areas: developing common measures and metrics; evaluating new and existing interventions; expediting assessment of promising policies and environmental changes; and accelerating application of strategies to speed progress. Learn more about NCCOR at <http://www.nccor.org/index.html>.

As reported in the *Boston Globe*, Massachusetts' lawmakers are expected to adopt legislation next month that would require schools to measure students' body mass index (BMI). Massachusetts would be the second state to mandate BMI screenings in schools, joining Arkansas, which enacted similar legislation six years ago. Public schools in Massachusetts would measure the height and weight of students in first, fourth, seventh and tenth grades, and

parents will have the choice to exempt their children from the screenings. Individual screening results would be provided to parents to encourage intervention if a child is obese or at risk of becoming obese. Selected schools are expected to begin screening their students this fall, with the remaining schools following in the next school year. [Click here](#) to access the full article, "[Taking the measure of youth obesity.](#)"

The [National WIC Association](#) has teamed up with the [Sesame Workshop](#), the creator of Sesame Street, on a healthy eating educational campaign, [Healthy Habits for Life: Get Healthy Now](#). The partnership supports the nutritional and health efforts of the WIC program, which serves over 9 million mothers and young children each month, and promotes the program's revised food voucher system that now contains more vegetables and fruits, whole grains, reduced fat dairy options, tofu and soy products. Under the program, all WIC recipients will receive an outreach kit that includes a DVD and storybook featuring the Sesame Street Muppets designed to teach children to make food, drink and activity choices to grow up healthy. A guide for parents and caregivers is also included that contains strategies and hands-on activities they can use to encourage healthy behaviors. For more information see the [USDA's official press release](#) and the [Sesame Workshop's website](#).

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### **Adolescent Health & the Media**

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"[Why Do Adolescent Health Researchers Ignore the Impact of the Media?](#)", a commentary by Victor Strasburger, MD in the [Journal of Adolescent Health](#), urges researchers to include the impact of the media in studies of adolescent behavior. He outlines research on how the media affects teen violence, sex, drugs, obesity, eating disorders and school performance as well as how it can promote prosocial behavior. As a significant "socializing agent," it is critical that the media be considered in social science research on adolescent behavior. Access the full text article at [http://www.jahonline.org/article/S1054-139X\(08\)00686-1/fulltext](http://www.jahonline.org/article/S1054-139X(08)00686-1/fulltext).

In collaboration with the [Family Violence Prevention Fund](#) and the [Office on Violence Against Women](#), the Advertising Council created a new website aimed at raising awareness and preventing digital dating abuse among teenagers. [Thatsnotcool.com](#) addresses issues such as textual harassment, pressure for nude pictures and privacy invasions. It provides information to help teens identify abusive relationships and presents strategies and resources that they can use to get help.

With support from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), the [National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy](#) has published a new report, [Managing the Media Monster: The Influence of Media \(from Television to Text Messages\) on Teen Sexual Behavior and Attitudes](#). The report examines the positive and negative impacts of the media on adolescents' sexual knowledge, attitudes and behavior. The report contains a review of more than 20 media-based-interventions for sexual and reproductive health that have been conducted in the United States as well as examples from other countries. The report is available at http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/resources/monster/Media_Monster.pdf.


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## Health Plan Initiatives and Tools

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[Aetna](#), [Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts](#), [Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Carolina](#) and [WellPoint](#) have joined the [Alliance for a Healthier Generation's Healthcare Initiative](#) (Alliance Healthcare Initiative). The Alliance Healthcare Initiative is a collaborative effort by insurers, employers and national medical associations to combat childhood obesity through the provision of comprehensive health benefits for the prevention, assessment and treatment of childhood obesity. These benefits include at least four follow up visits with their primary care provider and four visits with a registered dietitian per year for eligible Children. The Alliance aims to provide more than 6.2 million children with access to this healthcare benefit within the next three years. See the [Alliance for a Healthier Generation's website](#) for more information. <http://www.healthiergeneration.org/healthcareprofessionals.aspx?id=294>.

Starting in January 2010, [Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Oklahoma](#) will offer an autism benefit to insured groups. Benefit enhancements are expected to include evaluation and management procedures, speech, physical and occupational therapies. For more information see http://www.bcbsok.com/autism_benefits.html.

[Independence Blue Cross](#) (IBC) is offering the award-winning [Health eTools for Schools](#) web-based program at no cost to the school district of Philadelphia. The Philadelphia school district will add approximately 161,000 students from 270 schools resulting in a total enrollment in Health eTools for Schools in the five-county region of nearly 375,000 students. IBC launched the program last spring in schools throughout the region to help school nurses, teachers, administrators and parents reduce student obesity and encourage young people to adopt healthy lifestyles. For more information see http://www.ibx.com/news_events/press_releases/2009/01_13_Philadelphia_School_District_a.html.

On March 13 [BlueCross BlueShield of South Carolina Foundation](#) (BCBSSCF) is granting almost \$1.4 million to expand the nationally recognized [Nurse-Family Partnership](#) (NFP) program in South Carolina. NFP is an evidence-based, nurse home visiting program to improve the health of low-income, first-time parents and their children. BCBSSCF is partnering with The Duke Endowment, South Carolina First Steps, the Children's Trust of South Carolina and the Department of Health and Environmental Control to target 100 families in Horry County, following them from the point of pregnancy confirmation through the child's second year. For more information on this initiative see BCBSSCF's [official press release](#) and the [NFP website](#).

In 2008 the [Horizon Foundation for New Jersey](#) awarded \$6.6 million in grants to 125 organizations to support programs addressing childhood obesity and other public health issues. Awards included: \$50,000 to Children's Futures in Trenton in support of its comprehensive obesity prevention and education program for children ages 0-3; \$20,000 to the New Jersey Institute of Technology Foundation for its Promoting Better Health for At-Risk Teenagers Initiative that encourages young people to lead healthier lives through better nutrition and physical fitness; \$20,000 to the Greater Newark Conservatory for its Nutrition Education Program that highlights the role of nutrition in preventing chronic diseases; \$20,000 to the Newark Boys Chorus School for a project that provides physical activities to students to help

balance time spent in the classroom. For information on other recipients, see http://www.horizon-bcbsnj.com/news_room/news_releases/article.html?id=11114.

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**AIM, NIIAH and PIPPAH Collaborative Activities**  
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NIHCM Foundation is part of three collaboratives aimed at improving the Maternal, Child and Adolescent Health: the [Alliance for Improving Maternal and Child Health \(AIM\)](#), the [National Initiative to Improve Adolescent Health \(NIIAH\)](#) and the [Partners in Program Planning for Adolescent Health \(PIPPAH\)](#) Collaborative. These alliances are comprised of national membership organizations representing decision makers within state and local government, maternal, child and adolescent health professions, foundations, the health insurance industry, and business, as well as advocates for families. As part of these efforts, NIHCM Foundation occasionally highlights the publications and activities of the other organizations participating in the collaboratives.

On March 11 the [National Initiative to Improve Adolescent Health](#) held its first of three free webcasts on eliminating adolescent health disparities and achieving equity. Entitled "[A framework for advancing the health, safety and well-being of adolescents](#)," the webinar featured two speakers: Paula Braverman, MD, MPH, Director of the Center on Social Disparities in Health at the University of California, San Francisco, who discussed the social determinants of health disparities and Renee Jenkins, MD, a Professor at Howard University and the Principal Investigator of the DC-Baltimore Research Center on Child Health Disparities, who discussed health disparities through an adolescent lens. Claire Brindis, Interim Director of the Philip R. Lee Institute for Health Policy Studies at the University of California, San Francisco, moderated the session. The two remaining webcasts in this series will take place on April 2 and April 29. An archive of the first webinar as well as information on the upcoming webcasts can be accessed at <http://www.mchcom.com>.

[Children's Dental Health Project](#) released a policy brief, "CHIP Reauthorization: Renewed Support for Children's Oral Health," on the dental provisions in the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) Reauthorization Act of 2009. When CHIP was created in 1997, dental benefits were optional for states, yet this law mandates dental coverage and greatly expands services. The bill contains eight major dental provisions aimed at improving access to dental care, expanding efforts to prevent dental disease, improving quality of care, and increasing accountability. Download the full policy brief at http://cdhp.org/downloads/2009Feb_CHIP%20Reauthorization%202.09.pdf.

The [Bixby Center for Global Reproductive Health](#) and the [Center on Social Disparities in Health](#) at the University of California, San Francisco has released a new film, [A Question of Hope: Reducing Latina Teen Childbearing in California](#). The film is based on findings from a study examined the insights, choices and opportunities of young Latina women in California through interviews with young women pregnant with their first babies. Half of those interviewed were teenagers and half were older, the latter having successfully delayed pregnancy until they were adults. The film is intended to be useful to policy makers, health and social services professionals, and other concerned with helping teens delay childbearing into adulthood. Suggestions on how to use the film, along with an overview of the study findings, are included with the DVD. To view the film online, please visit <http://bixbycenter.ucsf.edu/videos/video-lo-1.html>.

[NIHCM Foundation](http://www.nihcm.org) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to improving the effectiveness, efficiency and quality of America's health care system. The Foundation conducts research, policy analysis and educational activities on a range of health care issues. It fosters dialogue between the private health care industry and the public sector to find workable solutions to health system problems. Detailed information about the Foundation's projects and publications is available on our website, <http://www.nihcm.org>.

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