

Progress on CHIRP

Rep. Ed Jenkins (D-Ga.), a senior member of the key House Ways and Means Committee, recently agreed to sponsor the AAP Child Health Incentive Reform Plan (CHIRP). The naming of a House sponsor will add credibility to and boost the visibility of CHIRP in congressional debate this fall. Sen. John Chafee (R-R.I.), a member of the powerful Finance Committee, is the chief sponsor of the CHIRP bill in the senate.

Passage of CHIRP would require businesses to include children's preventive care in employee health plans in order for insurance premiums to be considered as tax deductible. Academy members are requested to contact their senators and local representatives, encouraging them to cosponsor the proposed CHIRP legislation.

At press time, the Senate Finance Committee had scheduled hearings on CHIRP and other specific tax proposals for September 16. AAP President Robert J. Haggerty, M.D., was expected to testify on behalf of the Academy. See the October AAP News for details.

Relatedly, the September issue of *Business and Health* magazine features several articles addressing CHIRP. One article, by Sen. Chafee,

details the CHIRP bill and argues for its passage. Another, written by 1981-82 AAP President Glenn Austin, M.D., provides a pediatrician's perspective on the need for stringent preventive health care. A third article reviews the experience of two insurers which automatically provide coverage for preventive child health care services. The article was written by Nancy Matlin, program specialist for the AAP Department of Child Health Care, Finance and Organization.

Budget highlights

The House and Senate have agreed on a final budget that calls for \$450 million in Medicaid cuts during the next three years, primarily through new requirements on states to improve third-party liability collections. As reported earlier in *Washington Update*, Medicaid proponents defeated Reagan Administration attempts to impose a funding cap on federal payments to states and managed to hold current-service levels for the program's low-income beneficiaries.

Pediatric primary care training grants also were to be eliminated according to the Administration's original budget proposal; current service levels were finally agreed upon.

Lives and money

Eight federal programs that provide social and medical services to children save lives — as well as money — notes a bipartisan study released last month by the House Select Committee on Children.

For example, the study findings report: childhood immunization grants save an estimated \$10 in medical costs for every \$1 invested; the supplemental nutrition program for women, infants and children (WIC) saves \$3 in short-term hospital costs for each dollar invested; the maternal and child health block grant saves at least \$3.38 for each dollar spent, and Medicaid's Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Testing (EPSDT) program saves \$2 for every dollar spent.

Working parents, child care

Increased funding for the Social Services Block Grant (SSBG), the establishment of experimental school-based child care programs and an increase in training and educational funds for child care workers are among the provisions outlined in a new bill before congress.

Called the Child Care Opportunities For Families Act of 1985 (H.R. 2867), the proposed legislation is

sponsored by Rep. George Miller (D-Ca.). The measure, which has 23 bipartisan cosponsors in the House, is estimated to cost \$861.5 million.

Bidding adieu

Two federal government health officials recently stepped down from their posts.

On August 9, Carolyn K. Davis resigned as administrator of the Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA). Davis reportedly claimed that "demands of the office coupled with critical personnel vacancies have prevented me from pursuing my own career opportunities." On August 16, Charles Baker resigned as under secretary for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Baker, who served as under secretary for one year, plans to return to the private sector.

Days off

The remaining scheduled recesses on the 99th Congressional calendar include: Sept. 24-26 for Yom Kippur; and Oct. 12-16 for Columbus day. Tentative adjournment is set for Nov. 1. Academy members are encouraged to note the recess dates and schedule appointments with local representatives when they have returned to their home states. ■

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Editorial says changes in society needed to reduce mortality

Lowering childhood mortality rates demands not only improved medical care, but "changes in society as well as in family and personal habits," AAP President Robert J. Haggerty, M.D., wrote in a recent *New England Journal of Medicine* editorial.

Dr. Haggerty noted that the Medicaid program and various maternal and child health projects have resulted in approximate equality of access to health care by different socioeconomic groups. "Yet differences in mortality still persist between classes," he stated.

"Half a century ago, when the major causes of death were contagious diseases, immunizations were developed and administration of them was later enforced," Dr. Haggerty stated. "What can we do in the 1980s about the major causes of death among children and their strong relations to race and poverty?"

At least part of the solution, he argued, can be found in prevention measures.

Premature birth, which sometimes leads to infant mortality, can be reduced somewhat through reduced smoking, reduced drug and alcohol use, and improved

nutrition during pregnancy.

Dr. Haggerty also proposed several legislative actions that must be taken to reduce childhood deaths from homicides, fire and motor vehicle accidents. The actions include: strict handgun control, enforcement of housing standards, required smoke detectors and an increase in the legal drinking age.

As important as it is, medical care has its limits.

"Precisely how much these measures would decrease childhood mortality is not known, but they deserve the same careful trial that ensuring pure milk or immunizations has had in the past," Dr. Haggerty noted.

"Today, changes in society as well as in family and personal habits are necessary to lower childhood mortality," he stated. "As important as it is, medical care has its limits."

The editorial appeared in the Aug. 8 issue of the *Journal*. ■

New Academy address

Academy members are asked to note a minor revision in the address of the AAP headquarters. Due to a local ordinance alteration, the Academy's address has been changed from 141 Northwest Point Road to 141 Northwest Point Boulevard.

Members also are reminded to use the street address when corresponding to Academy staff via the U.S. Postal Service Express Mail. The street address, as opposed to the AAP post office box number, will ensure prompt delivery. ■

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