

Washington Update

By Jodi Feldman
Washington correspondent

Disability programs reauthorized

AAP-supported legislation approving education programs for disabled infants and toddlers (P.L. 102-119) became law in October. The program was originally authorized as Part H of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

The new law specifies pediatricians and other physicians as qualified professionals to provide screening, diagnosis and assessment of developmental delays and disabilities in infants and toddlers. Prior to enactment of this provision, pediatricians were not listed as "qualified professionals" to participate in federally-funded education programs for disabled children despite the importance of their role in identification and diagnosis and as part of the interdisciplinary team.

"At a time of fiscal crisis in many states ... it is absolutely essential that (the federal government) continue early intervention programs and expand their application," said Sen. Tom Harkin (D-Iowa), chairman of the Senate Subcommittee on Disability Policy.

The new law authorizes Congress to release funds for disability-related programs. It does not appropriate that money.

Harkin is also chairman of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor and Health and Human Services Funding. He said the Senate appropriations bill includes \$175 million for Part H programs for fiscal year 1992, representing a 100 percent increase in just two years.

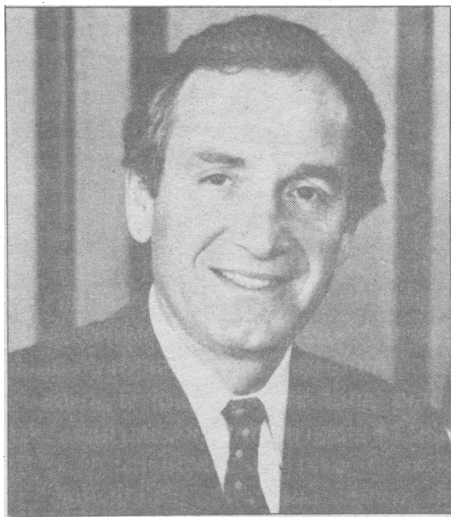
Infant mortality grants announced

President Bush recently announced the 15 communities chosen to receive federal money to fight infant mortality under the new "Healthy Start" program.

The program will seek out high-risk women who need prenatal health care and nutrition counseling in areas with high infant death rates. Program organizers hope to lower the infant mortality rate by 50 percent in certain communities.

Twelve cities among the areas selected for funding include: Baltimore, Birmingham, Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, New Orleans, New York, Oakland, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh and Washington, D.C. Additional communities expected to receive grants include: The Aberdeen-Area Indian reservation; communities in Iowa; Nebraska; North and South Dakota; Lake County, Indiana; and rural South Carolina.

The communities will share \$25 million appropriated by Congress for



Sen. Harkin: early intervention

the Healthy Start program in fiscal year 1991. President Bush has requested an additional \$171 million for the grant program for fiscal year 1992. Congress is reviewing the proposed 1992 budget and will not approve funding levels until later this year.

Family Leave vote

The Senate voted 65 to 32 in October in favor of the AAP-backed Family and Medical Leave Act of 1991. The legislation would guarantee employees up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave in connection with the birth, adoption or serious illness of a child, spouse or parent.

Although President Bush vetoed similar family leave legislation last year, proponents of the bill are encouraged by the recent Senate vote. Sixty-eight senators, including three who were not present for the vote, support the bill -- enough to override a presidential veto.

While opposition is expected to be stronger in the House, family leave supporters are optimistic. "[The Senate action] certainly lights a fire under the House, and the White House should sit up and take notice too," Rep. Marge Roukema (R-N.J.) said. Roukema is the chief Republican sponsor of the House family leave bill.

The House vote is expected within the next few weeks. A two-thirds majority in favor of the bill also is needed in the House to ensure a veto override. To find out your representative's position on family leave legislation, contact Randy Moore, in the AAP Department of Government Liaison.

Editor's note: Washington Update is prepared by the AAP Department of Government Liaison. For more information on AAP federal legislative activities, contact: AAP Department of Government Liaison, 1331 Pennsylvania Ave. N.W., Suite 721, Washington, D.C. 20004-1703; (800) 336-5475.

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Tax credit expansion benefits low-income families

By Mariann Meister Fishbein
News Writer

More than 12 million low-income working families will be eligible for inexpensive health insurance and other benefits under the recent expansion of federal Earned Income Credit (EIC).

The EIC is a tax credit for low-income working families with children. Created by Congress in 1975, the EIC aimed to offset the impact that Social Security payroll taxes have on low-income working families.

Working families who have earned a 1991 adjusted, gross income of less than \$21,245, and, have at least one child living at home for half of the year, are eligible to receive the credit.

The basic EIC for the 1991 tax year is a maximum of \$1,192 for a family with one child, according to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. Families with more than one child may receive as much as \$1,235. Most eligible families who earn between \$6,000 and \$13,000 will qualify for at least a \$1,000 credit.

Because the EIC is a refundable credit, those eligible may benefit even if they owe no federal income tax or if they don't have income tax withheld from their paychecks, said officials at the Center. To receive an EIC, a federal income tax return must be filed. The Internal Revenue Service will distribute refunds.

Families that qualify for the EIC and the new extra credits may receive as much as \$2,000 in 1991.

The new EIC health insurance credit might help low-income working families pay for healthcare and health insurance, according to the Center. This tax credit is designed to offset some costs of children's health insurance.

The insurance credit is available to families qualifying for other EIC's and paying premiums for health insurance policies that include children's benefits.

The health insurance EIC is worth a maximum of \$428 in 1991, says Cen-

ter officials. The largest benefit under this credit is provided to families earning from about \$7,000 to \$11,000. The health insurance credit a family receives can't exceed the total amount of health insurance premiums during a year.

EIC health insurance credits are, in part, designed to benefit families that pay a portion of the premium costs for employer-based health insurance. In addition to the health insurance credit, many families can receive additional EIC credit if they have a child born in 1991, Center officials said.

This extra credit is worth a maximum of \$357. These families whose income fell between \$6,000 and \$13,000 last year will qualify for an

extra EIC of at least \$300.

The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities has launched "The Earned Income Credit Campaign." The goal of the national public education campaign on EIC is to inform low-income working families about how to receive the credit.

The Center is preparing bilingual fact sheets and posters for distribution beginning in December.

To receive flyers, bill stuffers or posters, contact: the EIC Campaign, c/o The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 777 North Capitol Street, Suite 705, Washington, D.C. 20002. Ask for Stephanie Williams or Scott Barancik: (202) 408-1080.

Access to Care Campaign Update

As part of the AAP "Children Our Future" public awareness effort, the Academy is helping to support and promote a PBS television special titled, "Our Children At Risk."

The special is scheduled to air in November. Please check your local listings for exact broadcast dates and times. And please let your patients know about the program, too.

Produced by Roger Weisberg, "Our Children at Risk" addresses child poverty -- and how disease, hunger and lack of proper immunizations too often

accompanies poverty. Walter Cronkite narrates the program.

The AAP "Children Our Future" public awareness effort is one aspect of the AAP campaign

to ensure access to comprehensive health care for all U.S. children and pregnant women. For more information about "Children Our Future," contact: AAP Department of Communica-

tions, 141 Northwest Point Blvd., P.O. Box 927, Elk Grove Village, IL 60009-0927; (800) 433-9016, ext. 7878.



**Children
Our Future**