



Erin Marshall
Executive Director

September 4, 2010

The Honorable Kathleen Sebelius
Secretary, Department of Health and Human Services
HHS/OS/IOS
Room 615-F
200 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20201

RE: Ensuring confidential care to adolescents and young adults receiving U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) preventive health services graded A or B

Dear Madame Secretary:

On behalf of the New Mexico Alliance for School-Based Health Care, I write to request that you seek a solution to an existing barrier to delivery of the USPSTF A and B graded preventive health services for adolescents and young adults. We believe resolution can come from guidance or regulations being written to implement Section 2713 of the Public Health Service Act as amended by the Affordable Care Act.

The Affordable Care Act requires many health plans to provide coverage for clinical preventive services without co-payments or deductibles. This includes clinical services graded A or B by the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force, immunizations recommended by ACIP, and services recommended for children and teens in Bright Futures. STD screening and counseling, Pap smears, and HPV immunizations are included.

Despite this expansion of coverage, adolescent utilization of STD screening and other sensitive services may be impeded by an inadvertent breach of confidentiality. When a healthcare provider seeks payment from a health plan, the plan is required to issue an explanation of benefits (EOB) to the policy holder, often a parent or guardian, to detail the services provided. Thus, the EOB may inadvertently disclose an otherwise confidential service. This is a complex issue that is confounded by numerous federal and state laws and regulations, but it must be addressed to ensure young people take advantage of preventive care.

Options for addressing the EOB barrier to confidential services for adolescents and young adults include:

- **Eliminating the requirement to issue EOBs for all USPSTF recommended A and B preventive services.** Given the provision in the health reform law that requires USPSTF A and B clinical preventive services to be offered at no cost to

- **Excluding Chlamydia screening and other sensitive preventive services from EOB documents.** Health plans can inform policy holders in their annual policy statement that in an effort to uphold confidentiality, information about certain sensitive services will not be included in an EOB.
- **Providing a simple procedure for healthcare providers to request that no EOB is issued to policy holders for sensitive services.** Health plans can allow health care providers to request an exemption from the requirement to send an EOB to the policy holder when billing for sensitive services.
- **Providing an EOB stating general medical services were rendered, but not providing specific details and thereby helping protect confidentiality.**

The efficacy and effectiveness of the USPSTF recommended services have been demonstrated and the potential for improving health and avoiding costly, preventable complications is clear. The advent of health reform offers an opportunity to eliminate challenging confidentiality barriers for teens and young adults receiving A and B graded services. This will benefit their health now and in the future.

Thank you for considering this request on behalf of our nation's young people and those who serve them through school-based health centers.

Sincerely,

Patsy Nelson, MA, BSN
Immediate Past President
NM Alliance for School-Based Health Care

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