

WHAT'S A MEDICAL HOME?

A *medical home* is not a building, house, or hospital, but rather an approach to providing health care services in a high-quality and cost-effective manner. Children and their families who have a *medical home* receive the care that they need from a pediatrician or physician (pediatric health care

professional) whom they know and trust. The pediatric health care professionals and parents act as partners in a *medical home* to identify and access all the medical and non-medical services needed to help children and their families achieve their maximum potential.

T The American Academy of Pediatrics believes that all children should have a medical home where care is accessible, family-centered, continuous, comprehensive, coordinated, compassionate and culturally competent. Examples of these elements include:

Accessible

- Care is provided in the child's or youth's community
- All insurance, including Medicaid, is accepted and changes are accommodated
- Families or youth are able to speak directly to the physician when needed

Family-Centered

- Recognition that the family is the principal caregiver and the center of strength and support for children
- Unbiased and complete information is shared on an ongoing basis
- The family is recognized as the expert in their child's care, and youth are recognized as the experts in their own care

Continuous

- Same primary pediatric health care professionals are available from infancy through adolescence and young adulthood
- Assistance with transitions, including those to other pediatric providers or into the adult health care systems, are planned and organized with the child and family

Comprehensive

- Health care is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 52 weeks a year
- Preventive, primary, and tertiary care needs are addressed
- Information is made available about private insurance and public resources

Coordinated

- A plan of care is developed by the physician, child or youth, and family and is shared with other providers, agencies, and organizations involved with the care of the patient
- A central record containing all pertinent medical information, including hospitalizations and specialty care, is maintained at the practice
- Families are linked to support, educational, and community-based services

Compassionate

- Concern for well-being of child and family is expressed and demonstrated
- Efforts are made to understand and empathize with the feelings and perspectives of the family as well as the child or youth

Culturally Effective

- Family's cultural background, including beliefs, rituals, and customs, are recognized, valued, and respected, and incorporated into the care plan
- All efforts are made to ensure that the child or youth and family understand the results of the medical encounter and the care plan, including the provision of (para)professional translators or interpreters, as needed

The ideal source of a child's *medical home* is a primary care physician working in partnership with the child's parents. Medical care may be provided in various locations, such as physicians' offices, hospital outpatient clinics, school-based and school-linked clinics, community health centers, and health department clinics. Regardless of the venue in which the care is provided, to meet the definition of a medical home, the designated physician must work to provide services that meet all of the criteria set forth in the American Academy of Pediatrics policy statement on medical home.¹

¹ Medical Home Initiatives Project Advisory Committee. 2002. The Medical Home. *Pediatrics* 110; 184-186.

American Academy
of Pediatrics



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Division Of Children With Special Needs

The mission of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) Division of Children with Special Needs (DOCSN) is to improve the system of care for Children with Special Health Care Needs (CSHCN) by connecting them to a medical home. The DOCSN manages several grants that help to fulfill this mission. The Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB), Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) funds the National Center of Medical Home Initiatives for Children with Special Needs, a cooperative

agreement between the MCHB and the Academy. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) funds a cooperative agreement, "Medical Home Screening and Surveillance Program," designed to improve care for children with birth defects and developmental disabilities in medical homes, and to better integrate screening programs and activities in medical homes. The development and implementation of the *Every Child Deserves a Medical Home* training program is funded

through a grant from Shriners Hospitals for Children. Staff of the DOCSN work with federal agencies, state governments, professional organizations, and local communities to develop strategies and policies that lead to improvements in the care of CSHCN. Through the DOCSN, pediatricians, parents, administrators, and other health care professionals have access to educational and advocacy materials, guidelines for care, screening tools and guidelines, and a national mentorship network.

Training Program

The *Every Child Deserves a Medical Home* training program focuses on how to provide a medical home to children with special needs. The training curriculum consists of several components that include definitions of key concepts, practical strategies for implementing medical homes, as well as information on advocacy, screening, and transitions. Each component can be customized to meet the needs of a specific audience, including information about local community and state resources. Anyone who is interested in implementing the training program locally can receive technical assistance at no cost.

Technical Assistance

Technical assistance is offered to any person or group who is involved in ensuring children with special health care needs have access to a medical home. Examples of the types of technical assistance available are: facilitation of strategic planning with national and state leaders to develop plans to improve systems of care for CSHCN, assistance with planning training events and linking them into state-wide initiatives; identification of barriers and assistance in overcoming them; provision of educational and advocacy materials; identification of local, state, and national resources; provision of tools for families, providers and related organizations; and dissemination of outcomes; and dissemination of outcomes. A special effort is placed on providing technical assistance to state teams that comprise the National Medical Home Mentorship Network. Each team has developed a plan for how their state will achieve 100% access to medical homes for children with special health care needs by the year 2010.

Screening Initiatives

The Screening Initiatives in the DOCSN are focused on ensuring that all children receive early and continuous screening and surveillance through a medical home. An essential part of a child's medical home is the assurance that they will receive appropriate screening, treatment, and follow-up for identified problems. Activities include: the development of educational materials; the promotion of guidelines and tools that support various types of childhood screening; and technical assistance specific to integrating screening activities in the medical home. The "Medical Home Screening and Surveillance Program" specifically focuses on educating pediatricians about birth defects and developmental disabilities and better integrating developmental screening and surveillance activities with the medical home.

For more information about the Activities of the DOCSN, please call 847/434-4917, or send e-mail to medical_home@aap.org. You can also request membership to our e-mail list, through which you will receive our bimonthly E-newsletter "Medical Homes@Work", by sending e-mail to medicalhome@aap.org with "Subscribe" written in the subject line.

WWW.MEDICALHOMEINFO.ORG

You can learn a great deal more about the activities of the DOCSN by visiting our Web site at www.medicalhomeinfo.org or through the AAP Web site at www.aap.org, click on "Community Pediatrics," then click on "children with special needs." Nearly all of the materials produced by the DOCSN are available for download through the Web site including the *Every Child Deserves a Medical Home* training curriculum and appendices, Medical Home Mentor Team state plans, and screening guidelines. The Web site also contains a clearinghouse of resources related to medical homes, as well as state-specific links and information. An interactive discussion board is available to post information or respond to questions from people around the country. The "Medical Homes@Work" E-newsletter is posted regularly on the Web site with upcoming funding opportunities, resources and announcements.

