



November 2009



Parents Corner

Your child may be eligible for Medical Assistance if he/she has a developmental delay, specific diagnosis, and/or a diagnosed medical condition.

Medical Assistance provides the broadest coverage of medical and mental health services for children of any insurance plan. Medical Assistance can be a child's only insurance or it can be a secondary to other coverage, covering those services or equipment not covered by the child's primary insurance. Even if the family has private insurance, Medical Assistance will cover the deductibles and co-pays that can accumulate quickly for children with special needs. Medical Assistance does not have a lifetime cap on benefits and it does not exclude pre-existing conditions.

Even though you (the parent or caregiver) may not be eligible for Medicaid or Medical Assistance based on the family's level of income, your child may still be eligible. In Pennsylvania, eligibility for Medical Assistance is based on the child's disability and/or the child's income level. Some of the services covered under the Medical Assistance Program include:

- Inpatient and outpatient hospital and clinical care, including care by physicians, chiropractors, optometrists, podiatrists, dentists, and home-care nurses
- Certain formulas and nutritional supplements
- Medical equipment and supplies
- Prescribed medications
- Diapers for children over the age of three who have a diagnosis of developmental delay
- Behavioral health services

For information about how to apply for Medical Assistance, contact Susan Vandervort, Service Coordinator for Family Services/DART Program, at 412-394-5961.

Focus on Health and Safety

Talking about H1N1

For the last month I have received daily questions concerning the H1N1 virus and epidemic. Many people are anxious about "swine flu" (novel H1N1) because it behaves differently than the seasonal influenza which we have experienced in the past. It spreads easily and children who are less than five years old have been identified as a group who are at an increased risk for contracting it. The following is basic information regarding H1N1:

- Make sure that you have a basic understanding of H1N1 symptoms and how to control the spread of the virus. The most common symptoms of H1N1 include fever, sore throat and cough. The virus is spread when a sick individual coughs or sneezes. People can also become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouths or noses. More complete information can be found from the Centers for Disease Control and prevention website, www.flu.gov.
- Follow the CDC advice about vaccinating your children against the virus.
- Review basic hygiene (especially hand hygiene) and healthy lifestyle practices. Children should wash their hands (for 20 seconds with soap and warm running water) before and after eating, after toileting, and after touching toys or other objects which could have come in contact with the virus from another person's cough or sneeze. Their mouths and noses should be covered with a tissue or the crook of their arm when they cough or sneeze. Used tissues should be thrown out immediately and if their hands were used to cover their faces during a cough or sneeze, they should be washed or sanitized (with supervision) immediately. Another simple way to prevent the spread of the flu is to not share food or drinks. Emphasize with your child that these are all things that they can do to help keep themselves, their friends, and their family healthy.

-Cindy Callaghan, DART Preschool Service Coordinator
for Physical Health

Early Learning Standards 101 and The Importance of Play

This month's featured standard is Creative Arts. This standard focuses on creative expression as important part of children's learning. Teachers can help to support creative learning by providing play experiences that allow children to use their imaginations and experiment with new ideas and materials. Children have the opportunity to be creative in art projects, movement and music, and dramatic play, as well as enjoy what others create.

Some goals within this area include

- Showing curiosity and exploring visual materials and activities
- Showing care and persistence in a variety of art projects
- Responding to different forms of music
- Representing fantasy and real-life experiences through pretend play
- Using oral language to describe or explain art

There are many ways to help your child to be creative in his or her play. Here are just a few suggestions to get started:

- *Create an "art center" for your child* which has a small table and chair, as well as a variety of art materials (paper, crayons, pencils, glue, scissors, markers, play-doh, etc.). Encourage your child to talk about his artwork and displaying it in your house.
- *Let your child listen to music throughout his day.* This can be through cds, videos, or even your singing. Call attention to the music you are listening to by pointing out differences and changes in the music (fast, slow, singing, no signing, etc.) Try using simple musical instruments and have your child make his own music.
- *Encourage your child to try pretend play.* Your local toy store has many options for this, including dress up clothes, kitchen sets, grocery store supplies, etc. You can also use items you might find around the house, like dressing up in mommy's or daddy's clothes and playing "house." Interact with your child during pretend play. You can ask open-ended questions (those that can't be answered yes/no) and help to suggest play situations (like restaurant or grocery store) if your child is having trouble getting started.



- *Expose your child to the variety of art by taking him to the museum to look at paintings or sculpture.* Provide opportunities for your child to talk about other's artwork and how it makes him feel.

Make sure to check out next month's issue of the DART Board to read about the featured Early Learning Standard.



Build Responsibility with Daily Chores



Chores teach responsibility, self-control and give a sense of accomplishment.

- A three-year-old can put toys away. He can also put dirty clothes in the hamper, put dry pet food and water in bowls for pets, dress himself in pull-on clothes (no snaps, buckles or ties), and help make his bed.
- A four-year-old can do the above, plus help with setting and clearing the table. He can choose clothes, with help. He can help with brushing teeth.
- A five-year-old can do the above, plus learn to make his bed. He can get himself ready for school in the morning. He can make simple meals, such as sandwiches or cereal with milk.

Help Your Child Stay with a Task for Long Periods

Preschool children usually don't sit still to do one thing for very long. That's a characteristic of this age. However, your child will need to be engaged for longer periods (about 15 minutes at first, longer as she gets older) when she goes to school.

To help her practice:

- **Choose an activity she enjoys.** It's much easier to stick with something you like. "Let's read two books today, instead of one." "I bet you can finish the whole puzzle this time!" "Can you make a city with your blocks?"
- **Gently withdraw your involvement.** She may want you to play with her at first, and you should. But pull away a little at a time, over a period of days, until she is completing her task independently. If you're reading to her, encourage her to keep her eyes on the book and listen without interrupting you.
- **Limit TV.** Too many hours in front of the television may delay your child's ability to entertain herself.



Sources: "Parents Corner" created by Sue Vandervort, DART Preschool Service Coordinator. "Focus on Health and Safety" created by Cindy Callaghan, DART Service Coordinator for Physical Health. Early Learning Standards and The Importance of Play" information provided by PDE and DPW. "Build responsibility with daily chores" and "Help your child stay with a task for long periods" articles reprinted from the November 2005 issue of *Parents make the difference! E. Childhood Edition newsletter.*

