

Health Matters

A MONTHLY PUBLICATION FOR PROVIDERS
IN THE SANDHILLS CENTER NETWORK

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Issue 12

EARLY CHILDHOOD HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT



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Health equity is an important issue that impacts early childhood health and development. As healthcare professionals, educators and parents, it is vital that you understand the role that socioeconomic and environmental factors play in shaping the health and well-being of our youngest citizens.

HEALTH EQUITY ISSUES IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

Health equity refers to the fair distribution of health determinants, outcomes, and resources within and between segments of the population, irrespective of social standing, race, or ethnicity.

Various factors contribute to health disparities in early childhood, including:

- **Socioeconomic status:** Lower-income families often face limited access to quality healthcare, nutritious food and safe living environments, which can negatively impact their children's physical and mental health.
- **Race and ethnicity:** Racial and ethnic minorities may experience discrimination or


language barriers that hinder access to healthcare services and essential resources.

- **Geographic location:** Rural and underserved urban areas often lack sufficient healthcare facilities, public transportation, and educational opportunities, leading to disparities in healthcare access and health outcomes.
- **Education:** Lower levels of education among parents can result in less knowledge of child development and limited access to resources that support early learning.
- **Environmental factors:** Exposure to pollution, toxins, and inadequate housing can lead to chronic health problems in young children.

To mitigate health disparities and promote health equity in early childhood, the following strategies can be employed:

- **Improve access to quality healthcare:** Invest in community health centers and

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SANDHILLS CENTER IS COMMITTED TO EFFORTS THAT IMPROVE
Health  Equity

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mobile clinics to increase healthcare access in underserved areas. Also, ensure that healthcare facilities are culturally and linguistically competent.

- **Support early intervention programs:** Expand access to early intervention programs, such as Head Start, which provide essential services like health screenings, nutrition support and parental education.
- **Address the social determinants of health:** Advocate for and support policies that improve access to affordable housing, clean water, nutritious food and safe neighborhoods.
- **Promote parental education:** Offer classes and workshops to help parents better understand their child’s developmental needs and the importance of early childhood health.
- **Collaborate with community organizations:** Engage within the community to create targeted interventions addressing the unique needs of different populations.

Ensuring health equity in early childhood is essential for fostering a strong foundation for lifelong health and wellbeing. By addressing the root causes of health disparities, we can work towards a more equitable and healthier future for all children. Stay informed and advocate for policies that promote health equity in your community and, together, we can create lasting change.



Sources and resources for this month’s topic:

The American Academy of Pediatrics -- [Policy and Child Health in the United States \(Vol. 137, Issue 4\)](#)

The American Academy of Pediatrics -- [Promoting Optimal Development: Identifying Infants and Young Children with Developmental Disorders through Developmental Surveillance and Screening \(Vol. 145, Issue 1\)](#)

FOR SANDHILLS CENTER PROVIDERS

Sandhills Center has a Tailored Plan preview website available to help you during the transition to Medicaid Managed Care. Providers are encouraged to become familiar with the site: <https://TP.SandhillsCenter.org>

You also may access the preview site from several links on our current SandhillsCenter.org website. There is a section with pages dedicated to our provider network featuring Announcements, information about Enrollment and Contracting, and more.



Learn more about these important health topics this month:

[Oct. 1-7: Mental Illness Awareness Week](#)

[Oct. 5: National Depression Screening Day](#)

- [Take a free, confidential and anonymous behavioral health screening \(including screenings for depression\) with Sandhills Center's Access2Care screening tool](#)

[National Breast Cancer Awareness Month](#)

- [Oct. 13: Metastatic Breast Cancer Awareness Day](#)
- [Oct. 20: National Mammography Day](#)

[National Domestic Violence Awareness Month](#)

[Health Literacy Month](#)

[ADHD Awareness Month](#)

Sandhills Center wants to make sure that you, as a provider, get the support and resources you need to make a positive impact on the lives of the individuals we serve. If you need assistance:

Call the Provider Help Desk - 1-855-777-4652

Visit the [Provider Support Portal](#)

Go to the Provider pages on our websites:

- Tailored Plan preview site: <https://tp.SandhillsCenter.org>
- Current website: <https://www.SandhillsCenter.org>

