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STUDY SUGGESTS MANAGED CARE ASSOCIATED WITH BETTER ACCESS TO CARE FOR FOSTER CHILDREN

WASHINGTON—A new policy brief suggests that Medicaid managed care is associated with better access to care for foster youth compared with fee-for-service arrangements. The brief provides a preliminary look at data analyzed by Melissa Bright, Ph.D., an Assistant Research Scientist at the College of Medicine and the Institute for Child Health Policy at the University of Florida, who recently completed research that looked at how a change in health care financing from fee-for-service to managed care affects health quality for foster youth.

Dr. Bright's research was underwritten by a competitive grant granted through a partnership between the Association for Community Affiliated Plans (ACAP) and AcademyHealth. Her research was recently presented at the Annual Research Meeting of AcademyHealth.

The study examines encounter and Medicaid claims data for children up to 18 years old in Texas and Florida – states which implemented Medicaid managed care programs in recent years – to develop comparative scores on access to primary care, well-care visits and emergency department utilization.

Preliminary analyses suggest that Medicaid managed care is associated with significantly increased access to primary care for children two years and older; with significantly increased access to child well-care visits for children ages 3 to 6 and ages 12 to 18.

"These data reflect managed care's strong emphasis on wellness. It's something that many of us in managed care have long intuited," said ACAP CEO Margaret A. Murray. "Robust data sets can illuminate many differences such as this. We're glad that Dr. Bright has looked into this issue – and hope that broader quality reporting will enable more such comparisons to be made."

ACAP funded Dr. Bright's grant through the AcademyHealth New Investigator Small Grant Program, which is designed to support the early careers of new health services researchers. This grant program funds innovative, timely, and relevant research and translation activities that advance AcademyHealth's vision of improving health and health care by generating evidence and moving evidence into policy and practice.

"This program offers a valuable early professional development opportunity to new researchers and funds important and relevant research," said AcademyHealth President and CEO Dr. Lisa Simpson. "AcademyHealth is proud to partner with ACAP to support relevant and timely research that will help improve health and the performance of the health system."

The data were presented at AcademyHealth's Annual Research Meeting in Boston. A full study, which will also examine emergency department usage, is under development for placement in a peer-reviewed journal later this year.

About ACAP

ACAP represents 56 nonprofit Safety Net Health Plans in 26 states, which collectively serve nearly 17 million people enrolled in Medicaid, Medicare, Marketplaces, the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), and other health programs. For more information, visit www.communityplans.net.

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