CDPH
California Department of Public Health

Children and Youth with Special Healthcare Needs

Definition Framework

This framework is designed to offer a clear, structured overview of the diverse populations that fall within the CDPH/MCAH definition of Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs (CYSHCN).

Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs (CYSHCN)

Have a Condition

- **Physical Conditions:** epilepsy, sickle cell disease, asthma, cystic fibrosis, congenital heart disease, diabetes mellitus, etc.
- **Developmental Conditions:** autism, learning disabilities, Down syndrome, fragile X syndrome, fetal alcohol syndrome, Prader-Willi syndrome, phenylketonuria, etc.
- **Behavioral Conditions:** ADHD, conduct disorder, eating disorders, etc.
- **Emotional Conditions:** anxiety, depression, PTSD, suicidal ideation, etc.

For more information please visit go.cdph.ca.gov/CYSHCN

At Increased Risk for a Condition

- **Childhood Trauma:** adverse childhood experiences (e.g., abuse, neglect, household challenges), exposure to violence, family instability, loss, and other traumatic experiences
- **Biological Risks:** very low birth weight, prematurity, presence of certain metabolic deficiencies, genetic changes/differences, family history, etc.
- **Environmental Risks:** absence of social support, air pollution, second-hand smoke, and Infestations that can exacerbate conditions such as asthma, etc.
- **Systemic and Structural Barriers:** racism/ discrimination, limited culturally and linguistically appropriate services, immigration-related fear, under-resourced communities (e.g. rural areas), and lack of insurance, etc.

Groups At Increased Risk

- Justice-involved youth
- Child welfare system-involved children and youth: emancipated, kinship, and guardianship, differential response, adopted. etc.
- LGBTQIA+
- Neonatal intensive care unit and infants that experienced birth trauma
- Homeless and unaccompanied youth
- Pediatric intensive care unit
- Pregnant or parenting youth
- Exploited youth: sexual, financial, criminal and labor exploitation
- Transition aged youth with special health care needs
- Children whose parent(s) and caregiver(s) have special health care needs or serious illness
- Infants with prenatal substance exposure