In California, about one in seven children are estimated to have special health care needs, which translates to at least 1.3 million young people across the state. Children and youth with special health care needs (CYSHCN) include infants, children and youth from birth to age 21 who have one or more chronic physical, developmental, behavioral or emotional conditions and require special health and support services. To better serve this population, the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), Maternal, Child and Adolescent Health (MCAH) Division collaborates with the California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) and other partners to improve systems of care at the state and local level, promotes collaboration between agencies, and provides case management, family engagement, screening and links to services.

**NATIONAL VISION:** Ensure optimal health and quality of life for all children and youth with special health needs and their families.  

**OUR WORK:** Through the Title V Block Grant, California works to promote developmental screening, local systems for referrals and linkages to needed services, high quality health care, access to primary and specialty care, and promotes medical home and transition services for CYSHCN. MCAH is currently engaged in a year of learning to connect with stakeholders, build partnerships, and expand our knowledge about the greatest needs and opportunities to support CYSHCN and their families. MCAH plans to culminate this year of learning by moving into a strategic planning process to guide future Title V-funded efforts to serve this important population.

**WE SERVE:** Infants, children and youth, birth-21 years, who have one or more chronic physical, developmental, behavioral or emotional conditions and require health and support services.

**FUNDING:** CYSHCN efforts are supported by the California Department of Public Health using federal funds from the Title V Maternal and Child Health Block Grant.
How Do We Know How Many Children Have Special Health Care Needs?

This number comes from the National Survey of Children’s Health, which covers children and youth from birth through age 17. Qualifying criteria to be considered a child with special health care needs in this survey include:

- Prescription medication
- Specialized service need/use
- Elevated service need/use
- Functional limitations
- Ongoing emotional, behavioral, or developmental condition

Then and Now: History of Title V and CYSHCN

Title V is a federal funding source designed to provide family-centered, community-based health care infrastructure and services to maternal and child populations in all U.S. states and territories. Services for CYSHCN have been an integral part of the Title V mission since its inception in 1935. In fact, at least 30% of Title V funding must be used to support CYSHCN.

Title V CYSHCN programs started with a focus on direct services for children with physical disabilities, due in large part to the polio epidemic during the 20th century. In 1981, Title V and other programs were combined into a block grant allocated to the states. As types and prevalence of special health care needs have changed over time, services have evolved and vary greatly from state to state.³

Partnership with Department of Health Care Services

In California, oversight for Title V funding is provided by the MCAH Division. A portion of the Title V funding that MCAH receives for CYSHCN is allocated to California Children’s Services (CCS), a state program designed to provide services to children and youth with the most medically complex health care needs. The CCS program is administered by the DHCS Integrated Systems of Care Division (ISCD) as a partnership between county health departments, health plans, and DHCS.¼ MCAH and ISCD are committed to working in close collaboration to meet the diverse needs of all CYSHCN throughout the state, through family engagement, increasing access to and quality of care, and improving systems at the state and local level.

Up Next:

MCAH is currently engaged in a year of learning to connect with stakeholders, build partnerships and expand MCAH’s knowledge about the greatest needs of CYSHCN in the state. MCAH plans to culminate this year of learning by collaboratively creating a strategic plan to guide future Title V-funded efforts to serve this important population.

Questions? Contact CYSHCN Project Director Sarah Leff at Sarah.Leff@cdph.ca.gov or 916-650-0372

References:


