

MEDICAID, CIRCUMCISION, AND YOUR TAX DOLLARS

Are you aware that taxpayers, through Medicaid, pay for 28% of America's newborn circumcisions, an elective and non-therapeutic procedure which is considered medically unnecessary?¹

Currently, millions of Americans go without any health insurance coverage at all and many more go without adequate coverage, while millions of dollars in taxpayer money are used to fund unnecessary circumcisions.

Medicaid money spent on circumcisions is money taken away from other critical and legitimate medical needs of low-income families.

Besides being a misuse of taxpayer dollars, Medicaid payment for elective circumcisions sends the wrong message:

- Medicaid parents may mistakenly believe that circumcision is expected or recommended, because they know that Medicaid is supposed to cover only medically necessary procedures.

- Medicaid payment for circumcision may provide a financial incentive to doctors and hospitals to encourage Medicaid parents to circumcise, despite the lack of medical justification.

WHAT IS BEING DONE TO END MEDICAID FUNDING OF UNNECESSARY CIRCUMCISIONS?

Recently, grassroots efforts in several states have eliminated Medicaid funding for unnecessary circumcisions, freeing up millions of dollars for truly necessary medical services for the poor.

Arizona, California, Florida, Idaho, Louisiana, Maine, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nevada, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oregon, Utah, and Washington have all eliminated Medicaid coverage for elective circumcisions. Legislation is pending in several other states.

In these states, Medicaid will still pay for circumcisions that prove to be medically necessary. And parents can still choose to circumcise for non-medical reasons, but **not at state expense.**

HOW CAN I HELP?

To help make sure that scarce Medicaid money is going toward real medical needs instead of unnecessary circumcisions, here are a few suggestions:

1. Contact your state's legislators and Medicaid director. State government websites can be accessed at: www.statelocalgov.net. Find your state legislators by your Zip Code at: www.vote-smart.org. Medicaid directors can be found at: www.nasmd.org/members.htm.
2. Write a brief letter to the legislators. Contact as many as possible, not just those representing your district. You never know who is going to be most helpful. Make sure the letter is personalized ("Dear Senator Smith").
3. Consider driving to the legislative building and hand delivering the letter to your legislators. This can really make an impression (and offer you a wonderful opportunity to participate in democracy in action).

¹ To access full texts of the circumcision position statements of the world's major medical groups, visit: www.cirp.org/library/statements

HERE ARE THE IMPORTANT POINTS TO EMPHASIZE TO YOUR LEGISLATOR:

- Newborn circumcision is **not recommended** by the American Academy of Pediatrics² or any other medical organization in the world.
- Newborn circumcision is considered **medically unnecessary** by all major medical organizations.
- Newborn circumcision is **not cost-effective**, according to a recent comprehensive analysis.³
- **Sixteen states** have already eliminated Medicaid funding of unnecessary circumcisions.
- Medicaid money should be directed exclusively to meeting valid medical needs of the poor. When cuts must be made in the state Medicaid budget, unnecessary procedures, such as newborn circumcisions, should be the first thing to go.
- Moving funds away from circumcision to important medical treatments will **improve** the Medicaid program.

² American Academy of Pediatrics Task Force on Circumcision. Circumcision policy statement. Pediatrics. 1999; 102(3): 686-693.

³ Van Howe RS. A cost-utility analysis of neonatal circumcision. Medical Decision Making. 2004; 24: 584-601.

- Medicaid endorses circumcision by providing it for free. No medical organization endorses it, so neither should the government.

WHAT ABOUT PRIVATE INSURERS?

Many private insurance plans have also stopped paying for medically unnecessary circumcisions. Contact your insurance company to find out if they are wasting your premiums on this procedure, and if so, request they terminate coverage. After Medicaid has dropped coverage in a state, private insurers will often follow suit.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information on eliminating Medicaid funding of medically unnecessary circumcisions, visit:

www.icgi.org

To learn more about circumcision, visit:

www.cirp.org

www.circumcision.org

To find local grassroots groups, visit:

www.NOCIRC.org

In the Colorado area, contact:

www.ColoradoNOCIRC.org

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Find out why these states have stopped paying for unnecessary circumcisions, and what you can do to assure appropriate use of your state's Medicaid dollars.

