Protect Health Care Coverage for Adolescents & Young Adults

The Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine (SAHM) urges elected officials to oppose the American Health Care Act. The American Health Care Act would dramatically weaken both the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and Medicaid; both are critically important programs that have increased health insurance coverage for adolescents and young adults (AYA) to historic levels.

Although a majority of adolescents and young adults are healthy, health insurance plays a key role in ensuring AYA access to health services that can prevent costly health problems including obesity, smoking, HIV, and unplanned pregnancy. Additionally, 1 out of 3 adolescents has a chronic medical condition, such as asthma and diabetes. Prior to the ACA, 18-24 year olds were more likely to be uninsured than any other group.

The ACA provided premium assistance and other cost sharing subsidies based on financial need that were critical to increasing the number of adolescents and young adults covered by health insurance. The ACA also includes at least 4 additional reforms, all of which are critical for adolescents and young adults. It increased dependent care coverage up to age 26; eliminated pre-existing condition exclusions; required a package of essential health benefits, including coverage for mental health and substance use disorders; and eliminated cost sharing for preventive health services.

Medicaid has a long history of ensuring health coverage for low-income children and adolescents. It requires a comprehensive benefit package that includes EPSDT (Early Periodic Screening Diagnosis and Treatment) services for adolescents and young adults up to age 21. Medicaid has provided a guarantee that individuals who meet the eligibility requirements must be covered. Under the ACA, in states that chose to expand Medicaid, all single adults without children up to 138% of Federal Poverty level have also been able to enroll in Medicaid. This Medicaid expansion is an important source of coverage for young adults who were previously uninsured.

The American Health Care Act would disproportionately affect adolescents and young adults by eliminating important reforms that have resulted in historically high rates of health insurance coverage for youth.
The American Health Care Act would:

- Drain essential funding from Medicaid by capping the funding that goes to each state and eliminating the ACA Medicaid expansion
- Eliminate Medicaid’s guarantee of coverage for eligible individuals
- Threaten the comprehensive benefits Medicaid makes available to adolescents and young adults
- Eliminate income-based cost sharing assistance that helps make private coverage affordable for adolescents and young adults
- Interfere with an adolescent’s choice of health care provider by prohibiting funding for Planned Parenthood, which is also likely to decrease access to contraception and increase teenage pregnancies.

What can you do?

Call your members of Congress on Thursday, March 16 to tell them to protect Medicaid and oppose the American Health Care Act. Call the Capitol switchboard 202-224-3121. Select Option 2 and enter your zip code to identify and connect with your Representative and Senators.

Here is a sample message to use during your call: As a constituent and a health care provider for adolescents and young adults, I ask that you vote against the American Health Care Act. In my work, I see firsthand the importance of access to health care for young people as a foundation to promote healthy development and a safe transition to adulthood. I urge you to continue to make healthcare accessible and affordable for all.

SAHM urges you to make sure that the historic improvements in health care access for adolescents and young adults are not rolled back by voting against the American Health Care Act.