



Profile of Children with Special Health Care Needs in Ohio

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Children with special health care needs (CSHCN) constitute a vulnerable subpopulation with elevated needs and complicated utilization of health care services. Based on analysis of the 2008 Ohio Family Health Survey (OFHS) an estimated 570,000 children have special health care needs, representing 20.9% of all children aged 0-17 in Ohio.

This report addresses three aims in attempting to understand the health care needs and problems CSHCN encounter; the first is to present a profile of who these children are; secondly, what kinds of problems and barriers do they encounter when interacting with the health care system, and finally to determine the magnitude of these problems in comparison to children without special health care needs.

The findings demonstrate that compared to children without special health care needs, CSHCN have 1. difficulty accessing a required level of professional help to align care and referrals among different health care providers and services, 2. have higher unmet needs, and 3. incur more impediments to health care access in general. 4. Families with CSHCN face higher major medical costs than families who do not have a child with special health care needs. 5. Lack of health insurance and poorer health status are associated with greater levels of unmet needs and health care access.

Based on a national sample of children aged 0-17 years from the 2000 Medical Expenditure Panel Survey (MEPS) CSHCN accounted for 42.1% of the total health care expenditures in this age category (not including dental costs). Families with CSHCN were two and a half times more likely to have spent more than \$1,000 out of pocket in health care expenditures than families who did not have a child requiring special health care needs.4

There are a number of factors that predispose (e.g. age, gender, race /ethnicity) and enable (e.g. insurance coverage, usual source of care) access to needed and adequate health care. Along with the nature and severity of the illness or condition, these factors determine what level of health care access a child receives. Much of the academic research studying health care access for CSHCN focuses on the child's level of health care insurance.5

What do CSHCN look like in Ohio?

An estimated 570,913 Ohioan children (20.9%) under the age of 18 had at least one special health care need in 2008 (71.7% of children did not have a special health care need and the status for 7.5% is unknown). Most children who "screen in" with special needs do so after commencing grade school, hence a

disproportionate number of CSHCN are in older age categories (43.5% age 6-12, 39.3% age 13-17) and tend to be more male (58.8%) compared to children without special health care needs.

Black children are disproportionately represented as having a special health care need: 16.2% compared to 13.6% of non-CSHCN. CSHCN are more likely to **reside in a household with a divorced or separated parent 19.8%** vs **14.1%**. More than 60% of all parents surveyed have some college education and there is no difference if they care for a CSHCN. However, the level of college education differs as 32.8% who are not caring for a CSHCN have completed a 4-year college degree compared to 27.1% of parents who have a child with CSHCN

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