

CMS Kids Network - Medical Foster Care

Location: Florida

Date Submitted: 5/2009

Category: **Emerging Practice**

BACKGROUND

The Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF) web site states that there are approximately 10,000 children in Florida's foster care system each year. The National Survey of Children with Special Health Care Needs Data Resource Center estimated that 13.4% of Florida's children have special health care needs.

The purpose of Medical Foster Care (MFC) is to enhance the quality of life for medically complex foster children allowing them to develop to their fullest potential in a home-based program.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the MFC Program are to:

- Reduce the high cost of medical treatment associated with medically complex and medically fragile children by eliminating the need for long-term institutional care
- Enhance the quality of life and allow medically complex and medically fragile foster children to receive home-based services specific to their medical needs that will enable children to develop to their fullest potential, regardless of their prognosis
- Ensure that children with special need in foster care are assigned to a medical home
- Return children to a safe home with birth parents or relatives as soon as possible
- Facilitate the provision of a timely alternative permanent placement for children who cannot be returned to their family of origin
- Ensure that families who are reunited with children who have continuing medical problems will receive medical training in the care of their child prior to the return of the child
- Reduce the risk of medical neglect or abuse for children once they are returned to their own homes.

TITLE V/MCH BLOCK GRANT MEASURES ADDRESSED
#11: Percent of children with and without special health care needs having a medical home.
#12: Percent of children with and without special health care needs who received services necessary to make transitions to adult health care
#15: Percent of children 0 through 17 years who are adequately insured

TARGET POPULATION SERVED

Florida's Medical Foster Care Program is a state-wide program. Children in the foster care system with special healthcare needs are the primary target population for this program. During the 2008 calendar year it served 742 foster children with medical needs.

PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

The program provides family-based care for medically complex children under the age of 21 in foster care who cannot safely receive care in their own homes. They must be identified as needing medically necessary services to meet their medical complex condition, be in the custody of DCF, and be medically stable for care in the home setting. The MFC Program establishes and supervises the oversight and training of foster parents to provide MFC services for children with medically complex needs.

MFC programs are located in all areas of the state. Each local program has nursing and social worker staff that provides 24 hour oversight and case management services to the children and families. Each program has a medical director who reviews each child's medical needs in the program and provides medical direction to staff and families. In addition, each child has a primary care physician and in most cases, several medical specialists assigned to the child.

Once a decision has been made by DCF to reunify a child with their birth family or other family (adoption) the program staff and the medical foster parent work intensely to assure that the family develops the skills to care for their own child. This component of the program works very well and families become successful in caring for their child.

PROGRAM OUTCOMES/EVALUATION DATA

Data were collected on the number of children served in the MFC program and destination of those discharged. Staff also compared emergency room and hospitalization rates during the year prior to MFC admission to those same (decreased) rates following MFC admission.

Short-term outcomes include an 85% documentation of services by MFC staff. Long term outcomes include increasing utilization of the MFC Program:

Fiscal Year and Number of Children Served in MFC

03/04- 298
04/05 -507
05/06- 644
06/07 -689
07/08-744

PROGRAM COST

The MFC Program currently has 17 area office sites with 25 registered nurse positions, 24 social work positions, 18 medical director positions, 15 supervisor positions, seven administrative assistant positions, and one licensed practical nurse position. It currently costs a daily average of \$18.74 a day or \$6,970.32 a year to provide quality care in a home setting for each child in the MFC Program.

ASSETS & CHALLENGES

Challenges

- The main challenge continues to be under utilization of the MFC Program because foster children with special health care needs are often placed in regular foster homes

Overcoming challenges

- Continued communication with community based provider agencies and training of involved agencies' personnel is important to make sure children get the care they need

LESSONS LEARNED

It is important to include staff orientation training on MFC for all child protective investigators, foster care case workers, and foster care licensing counselors in Florida.

FUTURE STEPS

This program is ongoing and there are plans to conduct a legislative budget request as the program expands.

COLLABORATIONS

Florida's Medical Foster Care (MFC) Program is a coordinated effort between the Florida Medicaid Program within the Agency for Health Care Administration, the Children's Medical Services within the Florida Department of Health, and the Child Welfare and Community Based Care Program within the Department of Children and Families.

PEER REVIEW & REPLICATION

There was no peer review or replication cited at the time of submission.

RESOURCES PROVIDED

To find out more about this program, visit:

<http://www.cms-kids.com/cmsnetwork/fostercare.html>

Key words: CMS, Foster Care, CSHCN, Medical Home, Service Integration, Access to Care, Family Involvement, Transition

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