

AGENCY FOR HEALTH CARE RESEARCH AND QUALITY FISCAL YEAR 2010

The Agency for Health Care Research and Quality (AHRQ) is the health services research arm of the federal government, and is the main Public Health Service agency focused on health care quality. AHRQ supports research efforts designed to improve the quality of health care, reduce its cost, address patient safety and medical errors, broaden access to essential services, and examine health care organization and delivery systems. The current fiscal year (FY2009) budget allocation for AHRQ is \$372 million. In addition, under the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act*, AHRQ received an additional one time funding of \$300 million for comparative effectiveness research. This funding must be obligated by September 30, 2010.

As part of its strategic plan AHRQ has committed to make children one of its priority populations and establish the agency as one of the country's key public organizations for improving the quality and effectiveness of health care services to children and adolescents. The following is an overview of AHRQ priorities in health care research for children:

- **Improving Outcomes for Children:** AHRQ supports research into child specific health outcomes such as children's self-reports of symptoms and their overall health status. Other studies look at the effectiveness of different clinical care options. AHRQ also supports research on the impact of different organizational settings and systems of care on child health outcomes (e.g. the relationship between Level III NICUs and infant mortality).
- **Enhancing Quality of Care:** AHRQ supports the development of clinical practice guidelines, such as the diagnosis and treatment of Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). It also supports clinical practice outcome measures, such as the Child and Adolescent Health Measurement Initiative. AHRQ-supported projects also look at quality improvement, including more than 90 projects in a multi-year effort focused on improving patient safety.
- **Evaluating Access, Use, and Cost of Care:** AHRQ supports research on ways to reduce health care disparities in access to care for children. For example, the Medical Expenditure Panel Survey (MEPS) is an ongoing survey of how Americans use and pay for health care. Studies on use and cost include referral patterns for Medicaid-covered children and the effect of primary care access on children's emergency department visits.
- **Building Pediatric Research Capacity:** AHRQ strongly encourages all researchers to include children as part of their research populations and provides health services research education support and career development support through a variety of programs including faculty development awards in pediatric health services research. AHRQ also supports practice-based research networks as well as cosponsors an annual Children's Health Services Research Conference.

FY 2010 FUNDING RECOMMENDATION: The pediatric community, including the American Academy of Pediatrics, Academic Pediatric Association, American Pediatric Society, Association of Medical School Pediatric Department Chairs, Society for Pediatric Research and the Society for Adolescent Medicine join with other health services research advocates to request at least **\$405 million for AHRQ in fiscal year 2010** to ensure that AHRQ can continue its role in improving quality of care for children and adolescents. Additional resources will ensure adequate funding for overall high priority research needs at AHRQ including improving quality in child and adolescent health and supporting research that improves health care for children and adolescents.

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