Promoting Bright Futures as a Standard of Care for HFS-Enrolled Providers

Status Report, July 2011 – June 2012

Bright Futures is the national health promotion and disease prevention initiative developed by the Health Resources and Service Administration with the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP). Bright Futures seeks to improve the health and well-being of children through culturally competent approaches to addressing both current and emerging health promotion needs at the family, clinical practice, community, health system, and policy levels. Bright Futures is considered the gold standard for pediatric care because it encompasses a set of principles, strategies, and tools that are theory-based, evidence-driven, and systems-oriented.

Under the Affordable Care Act, health plans beginning or changed after September 23, 2010 are required to cover comprehensive preventive services for children as recommended by Bright Futures without any cost-sharing. These requirements may help the pediatric population gain easier access to routine and seasonal vaccines, well-baby and well-child visits, and other preventive screenings and services.

In recognition of these requirements and consistent with the desire of both the Illinois Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (ICAAP) and Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services (HFS) to provide unsurpassed care for children and families in Illinois, ICAAP and HFS have partnered to:

1. promote Bright Futures as the standard of care for children and adolescents in Illinois
2. assist in integrating Bright Futures into state programs such as Medicaid
3. improve awareness of Bright Futures among primary care providers, families, and advocates.

Project Objectives

The objectives for the Illinois Promoting Bright Futures project are to:

1. develop an infrastructure and materials to promote Bright Futures in Illinois, including assisting HFS with revision or production of materials, guidelines, and recommendations for policy changes to conform to Bright Futures
2. increase awareness of Bright Futures guidelines among Illinois Primary Care Providers (PCPs)
3. expand consumer awareness of Bright Futures materials on ICAAP and HFS Web sites, and other locations, as appropriate

In order to meet these objectives, the Promoting Bright Futures project has involved several distinct components. This report provides an update on the considerable progress made in each of these project areas during the FY12 year and the proposed work to be completed in FY13.
1. Recruit and convene Bright Futures Advisory Committee

To accomplish the project objectives, a committee of pediatricians and other stakeholders was formed. From June through October 2011, the opportunity to participate in this Bright Futures Advisory Committee (BFAC) was promoted in ICAAP communications including the monthly ICAAP-lets and quarterly Early Childhood Development Initiatives newsletter. Recruitment efforts resulted in the formation of an 11-member committee which included general pediatricians from FQHCs, private practice, and academic settings; developmental and behavioral pediatricians; a nurse practitioner from a school health setting; and individuals with policy, systems, and community expertise. The BFAC first convened in November 2011 and met over the next six months, both in small subcommittees and as a larger group, in order to lead the effort to review and enhance the Handbook for Providers of Healthy Kids Services (better known as the Healthy Kids Handbook) and other project components listed below.

NEXT STEPS: The BFAC will meet during FY13 in order to continue efforts to revise HFS materials, develop information for providers and families, and make policy recommendations.

2. Create a comprehensive Bright Futures Web site

ICAAP created an initial Bright Futures Web site, housed within the ICAAP Web site, with content designed to meet the needs of HFS-enrolled clinicians, as well as additional groups such as clients/families and community groups. The Bright Futures-specific section of the ICAAP website has been available since June 2012 at http://illinoisaap.org/projects/bright-futures/ with links to numerous national Bright Futures tools and resources, both for providers and for patients.

NEXT STEPS: ICAAP will use BFAC feedback to improve site usability and increase content, with a particular focus on increasing Illinois-specific content based on the Healthy Kids Handbook revision. This content may include a copy of the new Handbook, provider notices clarifying policy, or other materials that help link national Bright Futures tools and guidelines to local laws, programs, and resources. Another FY13 priority will be to query advocacy organizations and other stakeholders to determine if the site meets their needs and to cross-link content.

3. Enhance the HFS Handbook for Providers of Healthy Kid Services

The most significant FY12 endeavor has been the review of the Healthy Kids Handbook. Sections of the Handbook were systematically studied, first by BFAC and then by other physicians, stakeholders, and ICAAP staff with content expertise. These participants were charged with identifying guidelines inconsistent with Bright Futures, sections that lacked clarity, and content that could be otherwise enhanced. The ultimate desire of this endeavor was to improve the experience of providers and increase compliance with Bright Futures. Many changes were suggested by participants in order to enable providers to more easily access Bright Futures materials (e.g. Web links directly in the text) or reinforce key Bright Futures concepts (e.g. language about anticipatory guidance). A comprehensive list of recommended revisions was submitted to HFS in late May 2012.

NEXT STEPS: Following HFS’ review of the submitted recommendations, ICAAP will implement these changes to the Handbook. Possible FY13 activities may include the creation of new content, such as a comprehensive mental health section; recommendations for policy/systems changes that surfaced during the review process; and posting the revised Handbook on the Bright Futures section of the ICAAP website.
4. Communications, marketing, and outreach to PCPs, HFS contractors, advocates, and families

During this period, utilizing electronic communications, educational articles, and presentations, ICAAP conveyed the importance of Bright Futures as a standard of care to PCPs, HFS contractors, advocates, and families. Four quarterly Early Childhood Development email newsletters and numerous monthly ICAAPlets email newsletters containing information about this project and the effort to revise the Handbook in accordance with Bright Futures were distributed. An article in the spring 2012 Illinois Pediatrician highlighted the Bright Futures recommendations for vision screening among preschool-aged children, and was reprinted by Illinois Health Connect (IHC) for all their PCPs. In June 2012 a session providing an overview of Bright Futures, its features and benefits, and this effort to integrate it into Illinois policy was presented at ICAAP’s annual education conference. An article on this topic, entitled Integrating Well-Child Care into Policy and Practice: Promoting Bright Futures as a Standard of Care, will be published in the summer 2012 Illinois Pediatrician.

One of the more productive marketing activities in FY12 was the creation of a 2012 calendar for distribution to medical homes. Together with Illinois Health Connect (IHC) and HFS, ICAAP assembled 12 sets of patient/provider messages which were compiled into an innovative 2012 calendar for primary care providers and their patients. The calendars featured health promotion messages and guidelines gathered from Bright Futures and IHC. These messages encourage health promotion and disease prevention from birth until age 21 and beyond. Over 5,000 providers and child health stakeholders received copies of this calendar and many calendars have been prominently posted in waiting and exam rooms where families too can access these recommendations.

NEXT STEPS: FY13 activities will include developing Provider Notices, following the approval of the Handbook revisions, to educate providers on changes made and support them as they implement approved services. Articles, presentations, and other content may be created for other provider groups such as child care providers, early childhood educators, and home visitors. ICAAP will also promote well-child visits and anticipatory guidance by participating in the Illinois Health Connect 2013 calendar.

5. Policy and advocacy efforts

As part of the review of the Healthy Kids Handbook, the BFAC identified areas where changes in HFS policy or procedure might help assure compliance with and enhanced spread of Bright Futures tools. Many initial recommendations, such as inclusion of Bright Futures-recommended tools as approved tools or the addition of Bright Futures-recommended well-child visits to the HFS-approved schedule, were included in the comprehensive recommendations sent to HFS in late May 2012.

NEXT STEPS: Upon receipt of feedback from HFS’ review of the submitted recommendations, ICAAP will review HFS policy and determine areas for policy change, such as risk assessment or care coordination. FY13 activities may include engaging ICAAP’s Early Childhood Development Policy and Legislative Advisory Committee to suggest more detailed policy recommendations to HFS and formulate next steps regarding policy issues that emerged from the review process.
6. Preschool vision screening training activities
ICAAP partnered with IHC during FY12 to offer trainings to HFS-enrolled primary care providers on implementing vision screening among preschool-aged children. During this time, seven overview webinars were conducted by four pediatricians in Illinois (with assistance from a nurse and another pediatrician) and six follow-up technical assistance calls were held with a pediatric optometrist, Dr. Wendy Marsh-Tootle. Over 150 primary care providers and their staff participated in the webinars. A few dozen more practices received educational information and training after the last webinar was held. By first week of FY13, all 250 free vision screening kits were distributed to participating practices.

NEXT STEPS: FY13’s vision screening activities will ensure the sustainability of training material and reinforcement of vision screening as a key Bright Futures element. Several vision screening resources have already been linked from the ICAAP site at: http://illinoisaap.org/projects/bright-futures/education-on-bright-futures-topics/ and by the end of FY13, ICAAP plans for the overview training content to be available online as well. ICAAP will continue to participate in local vision health initiatives and to foster relationships with organizations such as Prevent Blindness America and their National Center on Children’s Vision and Eye Health.

Summary
ICAAP has made significant progress over FY12 towards revising HFS materials and increasing awareness of Bright Futures among Illinois PCPs. Following HFS’ review of the submitted recommendations to the Healthy Kids Handbook, further efforts toward integrating and promoting Bright Futures will be made in FY13, including:

- increase Illinois-specific Web site content based on the Handbook revision
- implement recommended changes to the Handbook by creating or overseeing the creation of new content, such as a comprehensive mental health section
- develop Provider Notices, and other articles, presentations, and outreach materials
- identify more detailed policy recommendations based on the Handbook review
- provide sustainable educational content around preschool vision screening in accordance with Bright Futures