

Agency adopts Institute of Medicine recommendations for insurance companies

to provide range of vital services without cost sharing

Washington D.C.—The National Health Law Program (“NHeLP”) welcomed this week’s announcement by the Department of Health and Human Services (“HHS”) that it was adopting the recommendations recently submitted by the Institute of Medicine (“IOM”) on women’s preventive health care. Beginning in August 2012, insurance companies will be required to cover preventive women’s health services, including breastfeeding support, domestic violence screening, and contraception, without charging patients an additional fee.

Susan Berke Fogel, Director of NHeLP’s reproductive health and justice program, praised the guidelines. “We are delighted to see HHS recognize that contraception is essential to a woman’s health. Requiring coverage of these preventive services makes sense both from a medical and financial point of view. We are disappointed, however, to see that HHS has included a religious exemption for contraceptive coverage—the ACA includes no such exception. All women should be able to make their own decisions about whether or when they want to become pregnant based on their own beliefs, not the beliefs of their employers. We hope HHS will take steps to ensure that all women, regardless of where they work, have access to the care they need.”

Under the Affordable Care Act, insurance companies must provide preventive health services without a co-pay, co-insurance, or deductible. HHS asked IOM to investigate which medical services are necessary to protect and preserve women’s health, and last month IOM released a detailed report recommending that eight services be offered without cost-sharing:

- well-woman visits;
- screening for gestational diabetes;
- human papillomavirus (HPV) DNA testing for women 30 years and older;
- sexually-transmitted infection counseling;

- human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) screening and counseling;
- FDA-approved contraception methods and contraceptive counseling;
- breastfeeding support, supplies, and counseling; and
- domestic violence screening and counseling.

A .pdf version of this article is available [here](#) .

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Founded in 1969, the National Health Law Program works with and on behalf of limited-income people, people with disabilities, and children to improve their access to quality health care and to enforce their legal rights to health. NHeLP works with courts, government agencies, and Congress to ensure quality health care for the most vulnerable members of our society. www.healthlaw.org