Promising Practices for Using Medicaid to Address the Needs of Children and Youth in Foster Care

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Virtually all children and youth in foster care are eligible for Medicaid and rely on it for health care services, yet they have disproportionately high physical, behavioral, and mental health needs. Medicaid and child welfare agencies share responsibility for supporting this population, making cross-system collaboration essential to ensure access to appropriate, coordinated care.

The brief highlights how states can use Medicaid financing tools—particularly **state plan amendments and waivers**—to expand services, improve care coordination, and better meet the complex needs of children and youth in foster care. These mechanisms allow states to tailor benefits, create specialized service models, and align Medicaid with child welfare priorities.

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