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Contact: Carie Behounek  
[carie@cyshcnet.org](mailto:carie@cyshcnet.org)  
720-289-5229

***Journal of Pediatrics* study examines Colorado Medicaid's paid family caregiving program**

Aurora, Colo (February 22, 2023) – Kids living with medical complexities need home health care. But workforce shortages and narrow state eligibility for who can provide such services mean much of the care they receive is being delivered by families without pay.

To address the issue, Colorado implemented a program through Medicaid to allow caregivers to become certified as nurse assistants (CNAs) and receive payment for the services they provide their children.

A new study published in the *Journal of Pediatrics* compared paid family CNAs providing skilled care to children with medical complexities to non-family CNAs, looking at retention and hospitalization rates. It's a model that could address workforce shortages while providing income to family caregivers of children with complex medical needs and disabilities, according to researchers from the Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs National Research Network (CYSHCNet).

The study published this week found that family caregivers were less likely to leave the paid role of caregiver when compared to non-family CNAs even at lower average pay. They found no differences in how many children were hospitalized and minimal differences in how long a child was hospitalized when it was needed.

“As health policy researchers, we are trying to understand how to address the dual problems of children not getting the health care they need at home while also addressing the family employment problems that occur when a child has a disabling condition,” said Carolyn Foster, MD. “Our study found that family caregivers can be paid for providing CNA-level care for their child in comparable ways to non-family employees, but with less turnover. States could consider adopting similar models in their Medicaid programs to serve children requiring in-home services who are currently unable to access sufficient home healthcare. Really, it's a win-win.”

Christy Blakley served as a family partner in the study. She agrees with Foster, saying it is her dream that every state and territory acknowledge how the significance of the care families provide their children with special health care needs.

“Paid caregiving is a game changer in so many ways,” Blakley said. “It reduces medical debt, and offsets the parent who must reduce or leave a job due to care for a child with special needs.”



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RESEARCH AND DELIVERY SCIENCE

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO | CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL COLORADO 13199 E. Montview Blvd. Aurora, CO 80045 Email: [Info@CYSHCNet.org](mailto:Info@CYSHCNet.org)



**Link to Full Study:**

[https://www.jpeds.com/article/S0022-3476\(23\)00106-3/fulltext#secsectitle0105](https://www.jpeds.com/article/S0022-3476(23)00106-3/fulltext#secsectitle0105)

**Contact Information:**

The study's lead author, Carolyn Foster, MD, MS, is available for comment at [CCFoster@luriechildrens.org](mailto:CCFoster@luriechildrens.org) or 312.227.2665.

The study's family partner and co-author, Christy Blakely, is available at [christy@familyvoicesco.org](mailto:christy@familyvoicesco.org) or 303-877-1747.

**About CYSHCNet:**

CYSHCNet brings academic researchers and lived experience partners together to study the health care system issues that matter most to CYSHCN and their families. The national network is based in Aurora, Colorado. Learn more: <https://cyshcnet.org/>.

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