

FAMILY PLANNING PROGRAM

The U.S. has one of the highest teen pregnancy rates among industrialized countries. Within our society, there has been ongoing controversy over how to respond to adolescents who are sexually active and need reproductive health services. Traditionally, low-income and underserved individuals have not had adequate access to comprehensive family planning services that including family planning education and counseling. In San Francisco, although utilization of subsidized family planning services has been increasing, only 20% of sexually active adolescent girls are estimated to access these services.¹

The Family PACT (Planning, Access, Comprehensive Treatment Program previously “Family Planning Services”) seeks to provide services to low-income women and adolescents who may otherwise not be able to access family planning. For many clients, family planning services often become the initial access point into the medical care system. Medical problems may be initially identified by family planning providers who then make referrals to the appropriate providers for further diagnosis and treatment.

Increased Access to Services

Beginning in March 1997, the availability of family planning services to low-income women and adolescents in San Francisco and throughout the state increased dramatically as a result of changes in California’s administration and funding of publicly supported family planning services. Midway through the 1996/97 program year, the State shifted responsibility for family planning services from a separate contractual program to the State’s Medi-Cal system. The new Family PACT program allows for a provider with a Medi-Cal license to become a designated family planning provider, and to be paid through the existing Medi-Cal billing process.²

This was a major change from the previous arrangement which limited the number of family planning providers available in each county, and capped family planning services at a set budget amount. Services are now entirely funded jointly by federal and state Medi-Cal funds, through a combination of grants and billed services. Also as part of this change, California raised the income threshold for clients eligible to receive services with incomes up to 200% of the federal poverty level (previously 150%). In San Francisco, the changes have resulted in the expansion of the number of public and private (non-profit and for-profit) family providers from four to 46, with many of these providers offering services at multiple sites.³

Description of Services

Services provided under the Family PACT Program include physical exam (including breast exam and diagnosis of sexually transmitted diseases), lab tests, education and counseling, and choice of birth control method. Services are provided at no cost to clients, except for a voluntary \$5 co-pay per visit. Women and both male and female adolescents ages 12 to 19 who are up to 200% of poverty are

¹ San Francisco Department of Public Health, Family Planning Program; based on a formula used by Alan Guttmacher Institute (New York, New York) to estimate sexually active teens.

² Designation occurs through an application process, results in direct contracts between the state and local providers. Providers must agree to adhere to certain quality of care standards of practice, e.g., confidentiality of records and access to services.

³ As of December 1997.

eligible to receive services. Clients must verify their income (through a self-declaration form) before receiving services.

Client Utilization

In fiscal year 1995/96, the most recent period for which San Francisco data is available, the program provided a total of 19,108 visits, of which 16% (3,109) were visits by adolescents ages 12 and 19. Demographic information on clients served such as gender and location of residence, and clinical information such as diagnosis is not available.

Among the four participating agencies during 1995/96, the San Francisco Department of Public Health provided almost half (48%; 1,453) of all adolescent visits; University of California, San Francisco at San Francisco General Hospital (30%; 948); Planned Parenthood (12%; 387); and the Women's Needs Center (10; 321).⁴

Within less than a year of the statewide changes, preliminary estimates indicate a 33% increase in the number of clients served statewide by family planning providers, from 495,000 to 650,000.⁵ Data on the number of clients served in San Francisco for the 1996/97 period is not currently available, although estimates are that the number served has increased significantly from the previous year.

⁴ 1996/97 utilization data provided by San Francisco Department of Public Health, Family Planning Program.

⁵ Preliminary data provided by State Department of Health Services, Medi-Cal Division.