

Government-appointed Medical Panel Supports Routine Depression Screening for Teens; AAP and AACAP Call for Improved Reimbursement Measures

The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) urges doctors to perform routine depression screening for all American teenagers, according to guidelines published in the April issue of *Pediatrics*. The USPSTF's recommendation is to screen adolescents (12–18 years of age) for Major Depressive Disorder (MDD) when systems are in place to ensure accurate diagnosis, therapy and follow-up^[1].

The report shows that undiagnosed MDD among youth is a disabling condition associated with serious long-term morbidities and risk of suicide. The government-appointed medical panel concludes that there is adequate evidence that screening tests accurately identify MDD in adolescents and that instruments developed for primary care have been used successfully with adolescents.

Mental health advocates agree that Task Force guidelines should be adopted by adolescent health providers as soon as possible and that medical professionals, private insurers and public sector health care must play a leadership role in expanding access to teen mental health checkups.

This issue of *Pediatrics* also includes recommendations from the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry titled: *Improving Mental Health Services in Primary Care: Reducing the Administrative and Financial Barriers to Access and Collaboration*^[2]. The joint task force proposes to: "Support the emerging use of standardized tools by paying for mental health screening at routine medical visits and paying for the administration, scoring, and interpretation of standardized mental health–assessment instruments."

[1] *Pediatrics* 2009;123;1223-1228. U.S. Preventive Services Task Force Recommendation Statement Screening and Treatment for Major Depressive Disorder in Children and Adolescents.
<http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/cgi/content/full/123/4/e716>

[2] *Pediatrics* 2009; 123; 1248- 1251. Improving Mental health Services in Primary Care: Reducing the Administrative and Financial Barriers to Access and Collaboration.
<http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/cgi/content/full/123/4/1248>