

Memorandum

From: The California Academy of Family Physicians
Date: September 14, 2006
Re: Policy Memorandum on Family Medicine Scope of Practice

The California Academy of Family Physicians (CAFP) strongly encourages the opportunity for members to practice the full scope of family medicine. This includes providing pediatric care from birth. Graduates of family medicine residency programs are well-trained in both inpatient and outpatient pediatric care. Furthermore, family physicians are particularly effective providers for children and families because of their wide breadth of experience and training. Because most family physicians see patients of all ages, children can look forward to having the same physician care for their needs from birth through adulthood, and thus truly provide continuity of care. Frequently with knowledge of the entire family, family physicians are at a real advantage in that they may also be more cognizant of the ongoing medical, emotional, and social issues within families that can adversely impact children's health.

It is therefore the CAFP's recommendation that prospective and new parents should be given equal access to selecting a family physician at the level of registration or nursing in a hospital, as a member of a health system, or at any other point in the continuum of care. In particular, when choosing a physician for their yet-to-be-born child, it is the Academy's strong recommendation that the parent be asked, "Who is or will be your baby's doctor," to ensure that patients understand that they may choose a family physician as their child's doctor. CAFP would also encourage, in the interest of fairness, hospital and health system publications to refer more broadly to physicians who care for children, rather than only to pediatricians. Rather than statements that refer to physicians other than pediatricians, the Academy recommends affirmative statements that explicitly refer to family physicians and pediatricians. This policy recommendation is consistent with American Academy of Family Physicians *Principles of Interaction between Family Physicians and Health Plans* which states that: "Health plans must explicitly include family physicians in any reference to access to 'women's health services and services for children and the aged.'"

Any questions about this policy can be addressed to Sandra Newman, Director of Health Policy at CAFP (415/345-8667) or snewman@familydocs.org.