STATE OF ARKANSAS
House of Representatives

Arkansas House Newsletter

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House Panel Reviews Health Care Issues



This week, the House Health Services Subcommittee of the House Public Health, Welfare and Labor Committee examined two important health care issues affecting Arkansans: behavioral health services for children and access to specialized women's health care.

The Arkansas Department of Human Services (DHS) presented findings on intensive behavioral health services provided primarily in schools to children with significant behavioral health needs.

During State Fiscal Year 2026, Medicaid spent approximately $38.7 million on these services, reaching more than 18,000 children ages 5–18.

The largest portion, $28.4 million, went toward behavioral assistance services, while another $9.8 million supported children in developing skills to manage daily activities and meet treatment goals.

Children ages 5–10 accounted for nearly 45% of expenditures, highlighting the demand for services among younger students.

The presentation also examined the diagnoses associated with these services. Among those accounting for the highest expenditures were ADHD, disruptive mood dysregulation disorder, conduct disorder, and anxiety. Lawmakers reviewed geographic differences in spending, with ten Arkansas counties accounting for approximately 56% of expenditures.

While these figures provide insight into how resources are being used, they do not necessarily indicate whether students are experiencing improved outcomes. DHS is examining how services are coordinated among schools, families, and behavioral health providers, and whether students are receiving the appropriate level of care. The agency also discussed a potential pilot program to evaluate improvements before considering statewide changes.

Members also continued discussions of an interim study proposal examining perimenopause, menopause, and postmenopause health.

The discussion highlighted challenges Arkansas women face in finding qualified providers and obtaining affordable treatment. According to information presented, Arkansas has 13 advanced practice registered nurses and 24 physicians with menopause certifications, although not all are actively practicing.

An Arkansas Center for Health Improvement study found that in 2023, 15 counties had no active OB/GYN physician. Members also heard concerns about insurance coverage, including copayments, deductibles, and limitations on certain medications.

Both discussions provided lawmakers with information about access to care, health care costs, and opportunities to evaluate services ahead of the 2027 Regular Session.