

OPINIONS OF OTHER NEWSPAPERS

Regs hurting kids

Hospitals and doctors across the country report that newborns have been denied coverage since a federal policy that prohibits automatic Medicaid eligibility to babies took effect this year.

And it's only a matter of time before this new law results in unintended tragedy.

The American Academy of Pediatrics is sufficiently alarmed by the possibility that newborns will wind up without preventive care, immunizations and treatments essential to their first year of life that it has asked the federal government to clarify the intended purpose of the policy.

Before President Bush signed the change into law in February, babies in most states were automatically eligible for Medicaid. States had to cover children's medical expenses for one year. The new policy requires that parents also fill out an application and prove the child is a U.S. citizen. The problem? Processing birth certificates can sometimes take weeks or months.

Texas has long required proof of identity for Medicaid applicants.

But the additional proof of citizenship requirement is making it more difficult to get help at chronically understaffed and overwhelmed eligibility offices

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in such cities as Dallas, Fort Worth and Austin.

Two hundred babies under the age of 12 months were denied Medicaid coverage between August and October because they lacked citizenship documents, according to the Texas Health and Human Services Commission.

The new guidelines are designed to curb fraudulent abuse of Medicaid benefits, a worthy goal.

But innocent children should not be left vulnerable because of possible paperwork tie-ups.

Even worse, misinformation might keep parents from taking their child to the hospital until the baby is gravely ill. Also, consider that denying health care now will only be more costly when the child ends up in the emergency room which by law must provide help to all in need.

One thing we can all agree on is that denying medical services to a young child who has no culpability in where he or she is born is cruel and unusual punishment.

Let's get this straightened out before we read about that first needless infant death.

CARTOON



COLUMN

Thanksgiving memories happiest of all

No matter how old I get, the childhood memories of Thanksgiving when Grandma Providenza lived with us are the fondest.

My mother's brothers and their families came to our house for the traditional turkey dinner with all the trimmings, with two exceptions.

We started with Grandma's ravioli and finished with Aunt Dorothy's cannoli.

Preparing for the holiday was a weeklong family project.

It began Sunday afternoon when Mom took out the tarnished flatware from the buffet.

It was our job, my brother John and mine, to polish the silverware at the kitchen table.

Every year, on the Monday before Thanksgiving, my father's boss at the upholstery shop gave him a 20-pound turkey.

Daddy put it in the refrigerator, then brought the large roasting pan up from the basement.

On Tuesday morning, Mom and Grandma went shopping at the A&P.

Their long list had seasonal specialties like fennel for the appetizers, cranberries and sweet potatoes for the vegetable courses and walnuts and chestnuts for the final course.

By now our refrigerator was bursting at the seams.

Wednesday afternoon, Mom and Grandma started cooking for the next day.

The tomato sauce for the ravioli bubbled away on the front burner.

On the back of the stove, the turkey neck, liver, gizzard and heart for tomorrow's dressing, slowly simmered.

Thursday morning, I awoke to the familiar aroma of sautéed onions and celery.

Mom and Grandma prepared the bread dressing then stuffed the turkey, while our dog Sandy stood by waiting to get the liver.

Daddy took a shining new half-moon-shaped upholstery needle and, like a fine surgeon, stitched up the cavities.

Mom rubbed the bird with butter and covered it with cheesecloth.

Then Daddy set the heavy pan into the oven to bake until the turkey was golden brown.

While Grandma and Mom turned to making the ravioli, I got the dining room table ready.

First I unfolded the pale green Damask tablecloth and napkins, which still smelled like the cedar chest.

Then I lovingly put down our best china plates, crystal wine glasses and lastly the silverware my brother and I had polished.

Mom always caught me daydreaming as I pretended we were entertaining royalty for dinner.

ANTOINETTE
JACKSON

*Mangia!
Mangia!*



Around two in the afternoon, the doorbell rang.

Our dog Sandy barked and raced to be first at the door.

Exchanging hugs, we all greeted Uncle Gene, Aunt Evelyn, cousins Genie and Richard.

Right behind them came Uncle Frank, Aunt Dorothy and cousin Prudy.

We first cousins were all born within five years of each other and always looked forward to being together.

My Aunts went into the kitchen to help with dinner, while one by one the rest of us drifted into the dining room and picked at the trays of antipasto.

After what seemed like an eternity of inhaling the mingling aromas of turkey, fresh vegetables and tomato sauce, it was time to eat.

The meal was perfection and we all complained we ate too much.

As was the custom in pre-television days, the men retired to the living room while the women cleared the table and washed the dishes.

Cousin Prudy and I dried and put them away, harmonizing to the songs of the day. The Patience and Prudence song "Tonight you belong to me" became our favorite in 1956.

I thought those times would never end and when we were grown we would be rotating from one cousin's home another for holidays.

But, life didn't work out that way.

My brother and his family live in California. Cousin Gene, a confirmed bachelor, is still in Illinois but not Chicago. Cousin Richard and his wife Pat spend their seasons in Michigan and Florida.

Prudy and her husband Jim reside outside of Washington, D.C. And my husband Jack and I live in beautiful East Texas.

It's been over forty decades since we all sat around the same table.

But I would venture to say if you asked my cousins to recount their happiest Thanksgiving memories, their answer would be sharing dinner when the meal started with Grandma's ravioli and ended with Aunt Dorothy's cannoli.

Mom's Turkey Stuffing

1/3 cup butter
1 medium onion chopped
2 stalks celery chopped
Cooked giblets and neck meat chopped
4 cups stale bread cubed
1 teaspoon pepper

1 / 2 teaspoon salt
2 eggs beaten
1 / 4 teaspoon ground sage
1 / 2 teaspoon poultry seasoning
1 cup giblet broth
Sauté onions, celery in butter until tender.

Add to chopped giblets.
Combine bread, seasonings and beaten egg.

Mix together and stir in enough broth to moisten well.

Fill dried turkey cavity and bake according to poultry directions.

Aunt Evelyn's Ravioli

When Grandma passed away, my Aunt Evelyn continued the tradition of making the holiday ravioli.

Pasta:
1 egg, beaten
1 tablespoon warm water
1 / 2 teaspoon salt
3 / 4 cup flour

Filling:
1 pound ricotta
1 egg
1 / 2 cup chopped parsley
1 teaspoon salt
1 / 4 teaspoon black pepper
3 tablespoons grated Romano cheese

To seal:
1 egg white
1 teaspoon water

Add water, then salt to beaten egg. Add the flour, a small amount at a time, until thoroughly blended.

Turn on to floured board and knead a few minutes until smooth.

Add more flour if sticky.
Dough should be neither soft nor heavy.

Cover dough about 30 minutes to ripen. Roll dough to 14 x 14 inches.

Blend ricotta filling ingredients together. Mix egg white with 1 teaspoon of water and brush half of dough.

Put a heaping teaspoon of ricotta filling every two inches.

Take the other half of the dough and put it atop the ricotta mixture. With a knife or pastry cutter, cut the pasta into squares. Pinch edges together with a fork. Set the mounds of ravioli aside on waxed paper.

Bring 8 quarts of water to a rapid boil. Add 1 tablespoon of salt and one tablespoon of oil to the water.

Drop ravioli into the boiling water and stir them gently with a wooden spoon to keep them from sticking together or to the bottom of the pot.

Cook for about 8 minutes to al dente.

Drain and serve with tomato sauce, or butter and Italian cheese.

Makes 18 to 24 ravioli.

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