

# Arkansas Chapter

American Academy of Pediatrics

DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN®



# 2020-2021

# ARKANSAS

# BLUEPRINT FOR CHILDREN

Priorities and recommendations to optimize lifespan outcomes, foster child health and well-being, strengthen families, support our communities, and enhance the position of Arkansas as a leading state for children.

*The Arkansas Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics is incorporated in the state of Arkansas.*

# Building a healthy future

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## Development of this report

The Arkansas Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (ARAAP) leadership visited with dozens of pediatricians across the state about the future of child well-being and the future of pediatric practice. As COVID-19 upended the health care system, Chapter staff hosted weekly webinars to address concerns from members. These conversations contributed heavily to this action blueprint for 2020-2021.

## Core Values and Overarching Policy Goals

### **PROMOTE HEALTHY CHILDREN**

All children must have access to the highest-quality health care, so they can thrive throughout their lifespan. Policymakers must ensure that all Arkansas children:

- have affordable and high-quality health care coverage,
- have insurance with comprehensive, pediatric-appropriate benefits,
- have access to needed primary and subspecialty pediatric care and mental health services, and
- receive comprehensive, family-centered care in a medical home.

### **SUPPORT STRONG FAMILIES**

Together we can work to advance efforts to ensure that parents can give their children the best foundation for the future. Policymakers must ensure that all families have:

- work that provides a stable and adequate income and family-friendly benefits,
- safe and secure housing,
- affordable and safe child care,
- access to adequate, healthy, nutritious foods throughout the year, and
- resources that support positive parenting skills training.

### **BUILD STRONG COMMUNITIES**

Strong communities are the building blocks for strong families and healthy children. Policymakers must ensure that communities:

- are safe from violence and environmental hazards,
- provide high-quality early education programs,
- support public health systems that protect children from infectious diseases and support maternal and child health, and
- respond effectively when disasters and public health emergencies occur.

### **ENSURE OUR STATE IS A LEADER FOR CHILDREN**

Child health and well-being must be elevated and maintained as a priority in close coordination with partners in child health and medical care. Policymakers must develop and implement policy that:

- funds and supports public health and health services to help children grow into healthy adults,
- addresses environmental health and climate change issues that affect children, and
- addresses with urgency factors that make some children more vulnerable than others, such as race, ethnicity, religion, immigration status, sexual orientation or gender identity, and disability.

# 2020 - 2021 Advocacy Agenda

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### COVID-19 RESPONSE

Protect children, their families, and their health care teams from the impact of COVID-19

- Advocate for personal protective equipment for health care workers in pediatric facilities
- Advocate for access to testing in clinics and communities
- Advance guidance for schools and child care facilities
- Include pediatricians in the delivery of new vaccines
- Respond to related public health emergencies, including childhood immunization gaps
- Advocate for financial relief for providers to weather reductions in patient volume
- Provide opportunities for discussion and learning about COVID-19 with experts in the field

### SUSTAINABLE PEDIATRIC CARE

Secure the future of pediatric care, primarily through the Medicaid program

- Promote increased Medicaid fee-for-service rates, with a long-term goal of Medicare parity for Medicaid and ARKids First
- Enhance payment for delivery of vaccines and growth of medical home-based vaccine delivery sites
- Secure funding for newly required Medicaid services, including developmental screenings, autism screenings, and adolescent depression screenings
- Support inclusive and innovative pediatric medical homes, including issues related to telehealth
- Support physician wellness and burnout mitigation

### DEVELOPMENTAL AND BEHAVIORAL CARE

Improve developmental outcomes and behavioral health for children

- Ensure payer coverage for *Bright Futures*-recommended screenings and services, including maternal depression, developmental/autism screenings, and adolescent depression screenings
- Support care models, such as HealthySteps, that encourage successful referrals to supportive services, including developmental, behavioral, and social needs resources
- Remove barriers to integrated behavioral health care within pediatric practices, including telehealth

### SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH

Mitigate community and environmental factors that impact long-term health for children and their families

- Support policies that protect children from injuries, including injuries due to motor vehicles, firearms, all-terrain vehicles, and other leading causes of injury death
- Protect children from initiating tobacco use, including e-cigarettes
- Improve family economic stability
- Support access to care for parents, including through the AR Works waiver renegotiation
- Support policies that reduce systemic racism and positively impact children of color