

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

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