Put Alabama’s Children AT THE TOP

A Blueprint for Child Well-Being in Alabama

American Academy of Pediatrics
DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN™

Alabama Chapter
A Blueprint for Action

Groundbreaking research has shown that early childhood relationships and experiences—both positive and negative—have a significant impact on an individual’s health, educational, and economic outcomes decades later, through adolescence and into adulthood. As a result, positively influencing a child’s developing body and brain—rather than trying to identify and remediate more intractable problems later in life—is key to building healthy, productive adults.

In recent years, Alabama has made strides in addressing the challenges facing our children by expanding Alabama’s First Class Pre-K program and ensuring funding of Medicaid and ALL Kids thus far. Current state leaders must both preserve and BUILD UPON these successes. Children are our most enduring and vulnerable legacy. They must be at the center of state policy discussions and deliberations. A thoughtful approach to optimum child development is the single best investment in the future that the state can make. To this end, action by state government leaders is required to promote healthy children, support secure families, build strong communities, and ensure that Alabama leads the United States in supporting its children.

In 1819, more than 200 years ago, Alabama became the 22nd state to join the union. Our history is rich. Our future, however, lies in the hands of today’s children—and their descendants.
For all children to have affordable, high-quality health care coverage, and

Have access to primary and subspecialty pediatricians as well as mental health specialists

What YOU can do

- Support sustainable Medicaid and ALL Kids funding and efforts to expand healthcare coverage to all children
- Help build a foundation of family wellness by increasing access to healthcare for caregivers, including expanding Medicaid
- Build incentives and remove barriers to help recruit pediatricians and pediatric subspecialists
- Ensure that pediatricians can afford to care for Alabama’s children by refusing to support physician payment cuts
- Protect the medical home as the best place for all medical care for children, as well as preserve the freedom of the doctor-patient relationship

Child health is a strong predictor of adult health. Addressing health and development during childhood—from birth through adolescence—leads to improved life outcomes in many areas. Conversely, the inability to access health care services threatens the physical, mental, and social health and well-being of children and their caregivers.

Healthy Children

GOALS

- For all children to have affordable, high-quality health care coverage, and
- Have access to primary and subspecialty pediatricians as well as mental health specialists
Every child needs to grow up in an environment that is safe and nurturing. When a family lacks access to steady income, stable housing, adequate nutrition, and social and emotional support, it threatens the future of children. Our leaders must embrace a multi-generational perspective built on awareness of the fact that to promote healthy children, the state must first support secure families.

**Secure Families**

### Goals
- For all families to have access to jobs that provide stable income,
- safe and secure housing,
- affordable and safe child care,
- access to healthy, nutritious foods, and
- positive parenting resources and training

### What YOU can do
- Invest in programs that ensure affordable, high-quality child care for all families
- Support affordable and safe housing programs
- Expand parenting resources for high-risk families such as home visitation
- Strengthen the child welfare system to better serve vulnerable children and families
Strong communities are the building blocks for secure families and healthy children. Our leaders must ensure that all children and families are safe in their communities and have equal opportunities regardless of their racial, ethnic or religious background, how much they earn, or where they live.

What YOU can do

- Protect children by supporting research-backed efforts to reduce firearm-related deaths and injuries
- Increase the number of children in pre-K and improve access to high-quality learning programs such as Head Start and Early Head Start
- Reduce the burden of preventable disease by supporting vaccination programs
- Promote the awareness and adoption of trauma-informed practices in K-12 educational programs to help counteract the negative impact of adverse childhood experiences

Goals

- To create communities that are safe from violence and environmental hazards,
- Provide high-quality early education,
- Support maternal and child health through public health systems, and
- Respond effectively when public health emergencies occur
The way a state spends its money is a reflection of its values and priorities. Child health and well-being must be elevated and maintained as a top priority to demonstrate Alabama’s commitment to our future. The state government must invest taxpayer funds where they can have a long-term impact on the future of our state: our children. In this way, Alabama can lead the nation.

Leading the Nation

GOALS

• To lead the nation in caring for children, Alabama can promote medical, public health and health services research, and
• Address factors that make some children more vulnerable than others including race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity and disability

What YOU can do

• Support the medical, public health and health services research at pediatric hospitals in Alabama
• Aggressively protect the rights of children and families, including children who are disproportionately affected by discrimination and limited opportunity
• Provide adequate funding for multi-disciplinary review programs, such as child death review and maternal mortality review, so that the state can use these findings to prevent other deaths and improve the health and safety of children and families
Our 2020 Legislative Agenda

Legislative Priorities

• Improving child health through adequate Medicaid and CHIP funding and Medicaid expansion: Protection of sustainable funding for Medicaid and CHIP coverage for children is a permanent priority of the Alabama Chapter-AAP. Children comprise only 25 percent of the Medicaid budget, yet 58 percent of Medicaid recipients. In addition, the Chapter strongly supports expanded coverage for low-income Alabamians who don’t currently qualify for Medicaid, which would infuse much-needed federal funding to boost the state’s economy. Children whose parents have health care coverage have better health outcomes, and infant mortality rates have showed decline in expansion states compared to non-expansion states.

• Increased vaccination rates among Alabama youth: With only 20 percent of Alabama teens receiving all recommended vaccines, the Chapter supports requirements to enter vaccinations into the state immunization registry in order to strengthen state-level data and urges removal of unnecessary exemptions.

• Protection of the Medical Home and the practice of medicine: With the pediatric medical home established as the best place for care of children of all ages, the Chapter opposes any legislative efforts that threatens the medical home and supports those that protect it. The Chapter also opposes any attempts to control the practice of medicine, interfere with the doctor-patient relationship, or dictate requirements that violate current AAP guidelines and recommendations for the care of children.

• Adequate funding for birth to 5 services: The Chapter endorses state efforts to increase and protect funding for state-funded, voluntary, high-quality, pre-k programs, and advocates for adequate funding for early intervention services and early literacy services.

• Medical marijuana: The Chapter opposes the legalization of medical marijuana outside of the FDA approval process.

Educational Priorities

• Strengthening Alabama’s child passenger restraint law: The Chapter urges amending the child passenger safety restraint law to meet national standards using the latest evidence.

• Preventing arrests of mothers prescribed MAT for opioid addiction: A 2016 Alabama law provides an affirmative defense for expectant mothers using physician-prescribed medications. But local interpretations of the Endangerment Act continue to vary, requiring full education of all parties and increased awareness of successful recovery from opioid addiction.

• Raising age of assault rifle purchase to 21: Firearm-related injuries are the third leading cause of death among U.S. children, and 4.2% of children witnessed a shooting in 2017. Alabama is in the top five states in firearm-related death rates. The Chapter urges discussion to consider raising the age to purchase assault rifles to 21, mirroring that of handguns.

• Later school start times for high school seniors: Recent national evidence supports later school start times for high school seniors, which have been associated with decreased truancy, improved grades, and fewer car accidents in teenagers.

• Preventing cardiovascular disease in youth: The Chapter supports new laws to create a minimum age of 21 to purchase energy drinks in Alabama.
Our Partners in Alabama Child Well-Being

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