



Alabama Chapter-American Academy of Pediatrics

2019 Legislative Agenda

2019 Legislative Priorities

We advocate for:

- *Expansion of Medicaid:* The Chapter strongly supports health care access for low-income Alabamians who don't currently qualify for Medicaid. Studies by UAB and the University of Alabama conclude that expanded coverage would provide healthcare access for 300,000 Alabamians, almost two-thirds of whom are employed, and create 30,000 new jobs. Most importantly, children whose parents have health care coverage have better health outcomes; notably, infant mortality rates showed decline in expansion states compared to non-expansion states from 2014 to 2016.

- *Improved health care for children through adequate Medicaid and CHIP funding:* Protection of funding for Medicaid and CHIP coverage for children is a permanent priority of the Alabama Chapter-AAP. Children have no voice and comprise only 25 percent of the state Medicaid budget, yet 51 percent of the total number of Medicaid recipients. The Chapter specifically advocates for sustainable and permanent revenue solutions to adequately fund Medicaid through the General Fund, and strongly urges continuation of federal funding to sustain coverage of children in both programs in Alabama.

- *Protection of the Medical Home and the practice of medicine:* With the pediatric medical home established as the best place for care for the entire age spectrum (newborns to older teens), the Chapter opposes any legislation that threatens the medical home and supports legislative efforts to protect it. The Chapter also opposes any attempts to control the practice of medicine or interfere with the doctor-patient relationship, or legislation that dictates requirements for the practice of medicine that violate current American Academy of Pediatrics guidelines and recommendations for the care of children.

- *Adequate funding for birth to 5 services:* The Chapter endorses the Alabama School Readiness Alliance 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.

- *Reducing tobacco exposure in youth:* The Chapter joins other medical organizations in support of laws to reduce exposure to tobacco—both firsthand and secondhand—in Alabama's youth, including comprehensive smoke-free public places and raising Alabama's legal tobacco age from 19 to 21 in order to prevent underage nicotine exposure.

2019 Educational Priorities

- *Preventing arrests of mothers prescribed Medically Assisted Therapy for opioid addiction:* A 2016 Alabama law provides an affirmative defense for expectant mothers using physician-prescribed medications. Local interpretations of the Endangerment Act continue to vary, however, requiring full education of all parties and an 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 one to seventeen years of age and 4.2% of children witnessed a shooting in 2017. Alabama is in the top five states in the nation in firearm related death rates; in 2015 alone, 104 children under age 21 died of firearm injury in Alabama, and the number of children seen at Children's of Alabama, injured by firearms has increased seven fold in ten years. The Chapter urges legislators to consider raising the age to purchase assault rifles to 21, mirroring that of handguns.