

A 2024 Blueprint for Child Well-Being in Alabama
Put Alabama's Children
AT THE TOP



Alabama Chapter

INCORPORATED IN ALABAMA

American Academy of Pediatrics

DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN®



A Blueprint for Action

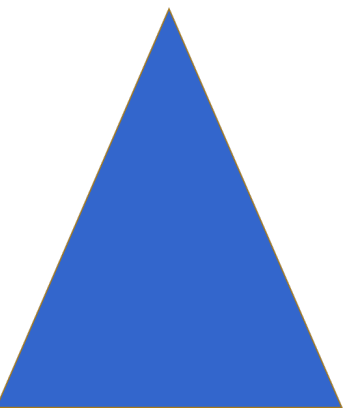
Groundbreaking research has shown that early childhood relationships and experiences—both positive and negative—have a significant impact on an individual's health, educational, and economic outcomes decades later, through adolescence and into adulthood. As a result, positively influencing a child's 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

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.



Pre-K program and ensuring funding of Medicaid and ALL Kids thus far. However, recent events, including the adolescent mental health crisis and an increase in childhood vaccine hesitancy, pose new challenges and threaten to undo our progress. Children, our most enduring and vulnerable legacy, must be at the center of state policy discussions as we move forward. 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.





Healthy Children

GOALS

- For all children to have affordable, high-quality health care coverage,
- Access to primary and subspecialty pediatricians and mental health specialists, and
- Access to immunizations and treatment

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.

What YOU can do

- Support sustainable Medicaid and ALL Kids funding and efforts to expand healthcare coverage to all children
- Build incentives and remove barriers to help recruit pediatricians and pediatric subspecialists
- 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
- Support the removal of barriers to childhood immunizations in order to protect all children
- Ensure equitable payment to all physicians who accept Medicaid in order to ensure access to care.



Secure Families

GOALS

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.

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

What YOU can do

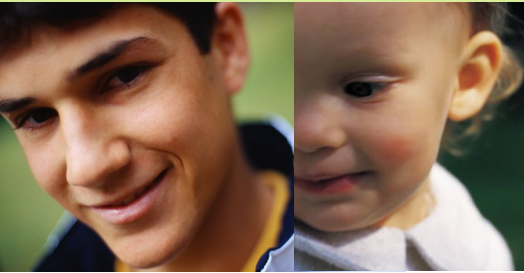
- **Help build a foundation of family wellness by increasing access to healthcare for caregivers who are in the coverage gap**
- **Invest in programs that ensure affordable, high-quality child care for all families**
- **Support affordable and safe housing programs**
- **Expand parenting resources for high-risk families such as home visitation**
- **Strengthen the child welfare system to better serve vulnerable children and families**
- **Assure adequate access to treatment for pregnant women with substance use disorder**

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.

Strong Communities

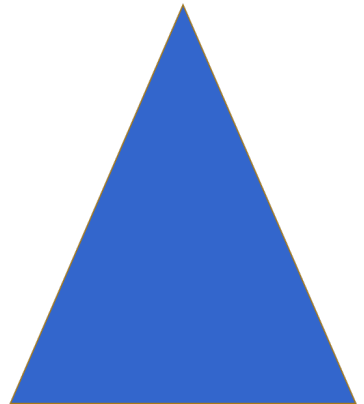
GOALS

- To create communities that are safe from violence and preventable harm,
- Provide high-quality early education,
- Support maternal and child health through public health systems, and
- Respond effectively when public health emergencies occur



What YOU can do

- Protect infants and children from preventable harm by passing and enforcing evidence-based child passenger safety laws
- Protect children by supporting research-backed efforts to reduce firearm-related deaths/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
- Promote the adoption of trauma-informed practices in k-12 education to help counteract the negative impact of adverse childhood experiences
- Support funding for expanded 988 services



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

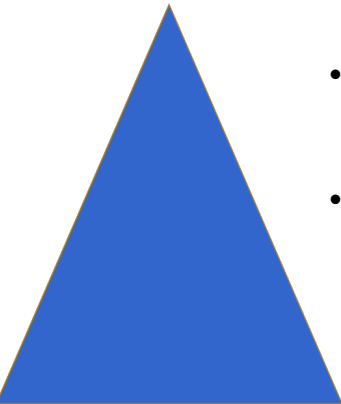
GOALS

- 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
- Address environmental health and climate change issues that affect children



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 2024 Legislative Agenda

Legislative Priorities

- **Increased vaccination rates among Alabama youth:** It is imperative that we sustain Alabama's historically strong immunization system to prevent childhood diseases. The Chapter opposes any legislation that would create barriers for children to access recommended immunizations.
- **Improved child health through adequate Medicaid/CHIP funding & coverage:** Sustainable and permanent revenue solutions to adequately fund Medicaid and CHIP for children is a long-standing priority of the Chapter. We also strongly support expanded coverage for low-income adults who don't currently qualify for Medicaid, because children whose parents have coverage are known to have better health outcomes. These priorities are dependent on an adequately compensated healthcare workforce to assure access for Alabamians covered by Medicaid.
- **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 threaten 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 American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) guidelines and recommendations for the care of children.
- **Adequate funding for birth to 5 services:** To support the needs of infants and young children, the Chapter advocates for: 1) additional funding for voluntary, high-quality, pre-k programs; 2) adequate funding for Alabama's Early Intervention Services; 3) continued funding for Maternal and Infant Mortality Review in the General Fund; and 4) increased funding for treatment beds for pregnant women with substance use disorder and their children.
- **Support for children affected by mental health issues:** Since the beginning of the pandemic, the AAP and other organizations have declared a national children's mental health emergency. The Chapter strongly supports the Alabama Department of Mental Health's budget request, which would fund 24 additional psychiatric beds at Wellstone in Huntsville, as well as passage of the "988 bill," which would provide funding to increase in-state response to crisis calls.

Long-Range Legislative Priorities

- **Amending Alabama's Chemical Endangerment Law:** The Chapter supports amending Alabama's Chemical Endangerment Law to reduce negative outcomes on families, further the law's original intent of protecting children from harm, and promote wellness in the community.
- **Strengthening Alabama's Child Passenger Safety Law:** The Chapter strongly encourages consideration of amendments to the state's child passenger safety seat law to reflect current AAP and NHTSA recommendations, which could help decrease the risk of serious injury to children in motor vehicle accidents by as much as 90 % and fatalities by as much as 67 %.
- **Prevention of firearm-related injuries in children:** Firearm-related injuries are the leading cause of death among children and youth, and Alabama is in the top five states in firearm-related death rates. We urge consideration of policies that to impact these statistics, such as safe storage, expanding background checks, red flag laws, and others.
- **Illicit substance exposure:** Protecting children & youth from exposure to illicit substances, from unintentional ingestion of medical marijuana to intentional drug use, is a long-term priority. Measures to protect youth such as stocking naloxone in schools and public places and requiring safer packaging of medical marijuana should be explored by the legislature.

Our Partners in Alabama Child Well-Being



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ChildrenFirst
Shaping public policy for Alabama's children

UAB MEDICINE
PEDIATRICS

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CHILDREN'S & WOMEN'S HOSPITAL

VOICES
FOR ALABAMA'S CHILDREN

Alabama Chapter-American Academy of Pediatrics
19 South Jackson Street
Montgomery, AL 36104
alaap.org
(334) 954-2543