

# KANSAS



## A State Child Health Policy Agenda 2023 and Beyond

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Priorities and recommendations to foster child health and well-being, achieve health equity, eliminate health disparities, optimize lifespan outcomes, and enhance the position of public health in the state of Kansas and establish the state as a leading state for children.

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# Policy Goals

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## PROMOTE HEALTHY CHILDREN

All children, adolescents, and young adults from birth to the age of 26 years must have access to the highest-quality health care, so they can thrive throughout their lifespan. Policymakers must ensure that all children, regardless of their race, ethnicity, income, family composition or immigration status have:

- equitable, non-discriminatory access to affordable and high-quality health care coverage, and access to medications
- public and private insurance with comprehensive, pediatric-appropriate benefits,
- access to needed primary and subspecialty pediatric care and mental and behavioral health services,
- access to necessary COVID-19 services, supports, and treatments, and
- comprehensive, family-centered care in a physician led medical home.

## PROMOTE SECURE 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, including paid family medical and sick leave,
- safe, secure, and non-discriminatory housing,
- affordable and safe high-quality child-care,
- access to adequate, healthy, nutritious foods throughout the year, and
- resources to support family placement and permanency within the child welfare system.

## PROMOTE STRONG COMMUNITIES

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

- are safe from violence and environmental hazards,
- provide high-quality early education, especially in segregated urban, suburban, and rural communities,
- 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 our state. Policymakers must develop and implement policies that:

- Protect against discrimination based on race, ethnicity, disability, gender identity or sexual orientation, recognizing the harmful effects such discrimination has on children,
- fund and support public health and health services to help children grow into healthy adults,
- address environmental health and climate change issues that affect children, and
- address factors that make some children more vulnerable than others, such as race, ethnicity, religion, immigration status, sexual orientation or gender identity, and disability.

# Advocacy Agenda

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## Kansas Chapter | American Academy of Pediatrics

### VACCINATIONS

Vaccines are safe, effective, and save lives. Immunizations are one of the most effective medical advances of our time, have led to significant decreases in rates of vaccine-preventable diseases, and have had an enormous impact on children's health. Pediatric practices are the public health infrastructure for Kansas' childhood immunization. The pandemic has provided an avenue for dangerous misinformation that has led to an increase in vaccine hesitancy. It is important to continue to promote the safety and effectiveness of all recommended childhood vaccines and provide access to every family in the state. KAAP supports policy that:

- Promotes ACIP recommended vaccines delivered based on the schedule recommended by AAP, ACIP, and local medical experts
- Eliminates any economic barriers to access of immunizations
- Increases vaccine confidence, and educates the public and key decision makers about the importance of routine child immunization, dangers of low vaccination rates and actively counters misinformation about vaccine safety and efficacy
- Includes only medical exemptions for vaccinations
- Opposes efforts to remove current flexibility and health professional based management of the ACIP list

### MENTAL AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

"Children and families have experienced enormous adversity and disruptions as the pandemic has struck at the safety and stability of families. Rates of childhood mental health concerns and suicide rose steadily between 2010 and 2020 and by 2018 suicide was the second leading cause of death for youth ages 10-24. We are caring for young people with soaring rates of depression, anxiety, trauma, loneliness, and suicidality that will have lasting impacts on them, their families, and their communities." The AAP along with the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and the Children's Hospital Association have jointly declared a National State of Emergency in Children's Mental Health. KAAP supports policy that:

- Increases pediatric emergency treatment capacity, invests in emergency mental health infrastructure
- Strengthens suicide prevention programs in schools, primary care, and community settings
- Funds comprehensive, high-quality community-based systems of care with evidence-based interventions in the child's home, community, or school
- Promotes high-quality trauma-informed care services that support child and family relationships and resilience
- Ensures mental health payment parity and integrated mental health care in primary care pediatrics
- Increases access to high-quality evidence-based pediatric mental health services for all children from infancy through adolescence including prevention, screening, diagnosis, and treatment
- Endorses paying primary care clinicians for the mental and behavioral health services they provide

# CHILD SAFETY AND WELFARE

Systems in Kansas should protect children through collaborative programs like the child abuse CARE program. Additionally, we believe that children in the foster care system deserve quality, consistent health care. Currently there are many challenges that prevent children in dangerous situations from getting the care they deserve. We support policies that include:

- Adoption of the CARE program which will create a triage system in the state, so child abuse reports are reviewed by experts, and forensic exams are performed when necessary
- Strengthen the goals of the Family First Prevention Services Act to further incentivize agencies to implement prevention programs and reduce child welfare involvement
- Promote family-centered and family-based care for children and youth in foster care
- Limit residential care to that that is only necessary to meet clinical treatment needs
- A comprehensive health care coordination system for children in the foster care system
- Single Managed Care Provider for children in the foster care system
- Collaboration with health care providers to improve continuity of health care

# SCOPE OF PRACTICE

Nonphysician clinicians, including nurse practitioners, provide valuable contributions in delivering optimal pediatric care, but the expansion of scope of practice for nonphysician pediatric clinicians raises critical concerns. Physicians have between 12,000 and 16,000 hours of patient care during their training compared to between 500-720 hours for nurse practitioners. As a direct result of their extensive training and experience, pediatricians possess the broad range of competencies required to best assess and manage health issues in children. The pediatrician is the clinician most extensively educated in pediatric health care and has the depth and breadth of knowledge, skills, and experience to deliver optimal care to children. KAAP believes that pediatricians and NPs are not interchangeable in the delivery of pediatric health care.

The Kansas Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics does **not** support policies that include:

- Independent practice for nurse practitioners without physician oversight and Board of Healing Arts regulatory oversight
- Expanded practice of pharmacists to immunize children under 12, provide diagnoses or prescribe treatment

# MEDICAID EXPANSION

Medicaid policies and procedures have a significant impact on the health of Kansas children. Parents with health insurance coverage are more likely to have children with coverage, less likely to have breaks in their own coverage, and more likely to remain insured. Having a reliable, continuous, and affordable source of health care in the pediatric medical home is vital for children's health and well-being. Uninsured children are less likely to have a medical home, more likely to delay care, utilize more expensive, episodic care in emergency departments, and have unmet health care needs. This results in a higher risk of hospitalization for preventable illness or missed diagnosis. Medicaid coverage results in improved access to care, health outcomes, affordability of care, and many economic measures. KAAP supports policy that:

- Support expansion of Medicaid to increase access to health care.
- Oppose lifetime caps for coverage
- Oppose work requirements that create barriers to health care

# TRANSGENDER PROTECTION

The Kansas Chapter of the AAP is dedicated to the health and well-being of all children. We strive to improve health care access, eliminate disparities, and promote health equity for children and teenagers regardless of their sexual or gender identity. Youth who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender deserve quality health care. Discrimination against the LGBTQ population impacts their health and well-being, impedes access to quality health care, and harms their mental health.

The Kansas Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics does **not** support policies that include:

- Discrimination based on gender identity or expression as it is damaging to the socioemotional health of children, families, and the state of Kansas.

# TELEMEDICINE

Health care providers and patients have relied on telehealth during the pandemic; now it needs to be sustained. Telemedicine provides both patients and health care providers with options that can contribute to positive patient outcomes, including chronic disease management, continued behavioral health services, and monitoring vulnerable patients. KAAP supports policy that includes:

- Expanded reimbursement and parity in payment for select services
- Relaxed rules for originating and distance sites and decreased regulatory challenges
- Protected access to quality care from the patients medical home
- Increased access to telehealth by addressing disparities in communication infrastructure, especially high-speed internet
- Requirement for quality care that maintains a high standard of care

# Kansas Chapter Leaders

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## Kansas Chapter | American Academy of Pediatrics

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