

MISSOURI



A Child-focused Health Policy Agenda for Missouri in 2021 and Beyond

Priorities and recommendations to foster child health and well-being, achieve health equity, eliminate health disparities, optimize lifespan outcomes, strengthen families, support our communities, and enhance the position of Missouri as a leading state for children.



MISSOURI CHAPTER
AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRICS

Policy Goals

PROMOTE HEALTHY CHILDREN

All children, from birth through adolescence and young adulthood, must have access to the highest-quality health care, so they can thrive throughout their lifespan. Policymakers must ensure all children, regardless of their race, ethnicity, income, family composition or have:

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

SUPPORT SECURE FAMILIES

Together we can work to advance efforts to ensure all parents can give their children the best foundation for the future. Policymakers must ensure that all families have:

- employment opportunities which provide a stable and adequate income and family-friendly benefits, including paid family medical and sick leave,
- safe and secure housing,
- affordable, safe, and high-quality child care programs,
- access to adequate, healthy, and nutritious foods throughout the year, and
- resources to provide positive parenting skills training programs.

BUILD STRONG COMMUNITIES

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

- are safe from violence and environmental hazards,
- provide high-quality early education across rural, suburban, and urban communities,
- support public health systems that protect children from infectious diseases, support maternal and child health, and address systemic health issues affecting children, including trauma informed care, 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:

- acknowledge racial inequity as a public health crisis and support partnerships with organizations and programs seeking to create equality,
- fund and support public health and health services to help children grow into healthy adults,
- reform juvenile disciplinary protocols to focus on rehabilitation and age-appropriate treatment, and
- address factors that make some children more vulnerable than others, such as: race, ethnicity, socioeconomic or family status, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, and disability.

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IMMUNIZATIONS

Statement: Immunizations are among the greatest public health victories in our nation's history. The vast majority of Missouri families choose to protect their families by immunizing their children, yet our state lags behind neighboring states and the national average in rates of immunization for children and adolescents.

Our priorities include:

- Increasing access and funding for immunizations in schools, health clinics, federally qualified health centers, and local health departments,
- Creating awareness of vaccine preventable illness by increasing funding for education regarding the safety and importance of vaccines,
- Publicizing the rate of vaccine exemptions per school so parents can make an informed decision, and
- Increasing the usage of *Show Me Vax* by healthcare professionals for comprehensive vaccination records;

TRAUMA INFORMED CARE

Statement: Toxic stress in childhood impacts mental and physical health throughout the lifespan. Preventing and mitigating the effects of childhood adversity requires a collaborative approach. MOAAP will work alongside community partners, stakeholders, and families to utilize best practices for trauma-informed care. Our priorities include:

- Educating health care professionals and school administrators, educators, and families about preventing, recognizing, and responding to adversity,
- Advocating for the needs of children, adolescents, and families who experience trauma,
- Promoting positive parenting practices and parental self-care, and
- Partnering with community agencies and home visitation programs to support families in their homes and aid in referral to other community resources;

MENTAL HEALTH

Statement: Parents, caregivers, educators, and pediatricians are the first line of support for children and adolescents with mental health concerns. Early identification and intervention are key to successful identification and treatment, and MOAAP stands ready to play a leading role in training and supporting professionals, parents, and patients in this practice. Our priorities include:

- Increasing access to mental health services in schools and community-based centers for children and adolescents, especially those in crisis,
- Increasing training for educators and physicians around youth mental health needs,
- Improving standard practice by promoting maternal depression screenings during routine visits,
- Promoting policies which enhance anti-bullying efforts, and
- Advocating for funding of mental health services, including suicide prevention programs;

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CHILD SAFETY

Statement: It is our responsibility to ensure that Missouri children are safe and healthy where they live, play, and learn. This includes ensuring appropriate use of car seats, requiring use of a bike helmets, and educating parents on best practices for reducing exposure to harm. Pediatricians play an important role to ensure children are safe and to provide caregivers with the skills and knowledge to proactively reduce harm. Our priorities include:

- Improving state guidelines to require the use of rear-facing child seats until the age of 2 and providing access to parental training for the proper installation and use of car seats,
- Advocating for increased access to tobacco cessation programs for pregnant mothers and youth,
- Promoting safe storage practices for firearms and awareness of available safety products to keep firearms secure and out of reach of children,
- Increasing awareness of safe sun exposure practices, including sunscreen availability and prohibiting the use of tanning beds for individuals below the age of 18;

ACCESS TO NUTRITION AND DEVELOPMENT

Statement: Access to food, nutrition, and developmental resources from infancy through late adolescence is essential to long-term success. Too many Missouri families lack access to nutritious food, adequate healthcare, and resources to reduce poverty. Easing this burden for Missouri families and promoting nutritious choices at home, in school, and throughout life are important steps in improving long-term health. Our priorities include:

- Helping families provide adequate nutrition for their children and families,
- Improving availability and frequency of physical education opportunities in K-12 schools,
- Increasing access to high-quality food options in schools & early childcare centers, and
- Advocating for better nutritional standards across Missouri;

ECONOMIC SECURITY FOR MISSOURI FAMILIES

Statement: A strong foundation includes financial security and access to high quality health care services and educational opportunities for the entire family. Missouri's children are the workforce of our future and deserve opportunities to develop into healthy, productive adolescents and adults from day one. Our priorities include:

- Advocating for access to affordable, high quality early childhood health and educational opportunities across the state,
- Creating a stable financial foundation for children through the development of child savings accounts,
- Ensuring families have access to Medicaid services and maintain continuous eligibility, and
- Implementing an Earned Income Tax Credit to build financial security for families.