

MISSOURI



A Child-focused Health Policy Agenda for Missouri in 2022 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 Missouri's children, regardless of their race, ethnicity, income, or family composition, have:

- equitable, non-discriminatory access to affordable and high-quality health care coverage,
- insurance with comprehensive, pediatric-appropriate benefits,
- access to needed primary, subspecialty and mental health care, including ancillary & support 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 which ensure all parents, guardians, or adult caregivers 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 childcare programs,
- access to adequate, healthy, and nutritious foods throughout the year, and
- access to 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 education across rural, suburban, and urban communities,
- equip and maintain public health systems that protect children from infectious diseases, support maternal and child health, and address 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 equity,
- 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.

Advocacy Agenda

Missouri Chapter | American Academy of Pediatrics

SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH

Statement: Social determinants of health fundamentally impact all aspects of a child's life. The conditions where children and their families live, play, and work are directly correlated to health, quality of life, and ability to lead productive, independent lives. It is imperative that social determinants of health are considered and addressed across a wide range of a child's environment to ensure they have the best chance for success. Our priorities:

- Advocate for access to affordable, high quality early childhood health and educational opportunities across the state,
- Support policies that end systemic racism and create equity in healthcare for children of color,
- Support policies that protect children from injuries, including those from firearms, motor vehicles, water activities, sleeping space, and other leading causes of death,
- Ensure all families have access to high quality food choices,
- Protect children from initiating tobacco use, including e-cigarettes, as well as increasing funding for tobacco cessation programs for youth, pregnant mothers, and families, and
- Support policies that improve family economic stability.

ACCESS TO CARE

Statement: Access to quality healthcare is critical to a child's development. Routine well-child visits ensure a child is healthy in all aspects - physical, emotional, and developmental. It is imperative that we break down barriers to access for ALL children and their families to improve outcomes and ensure a bright future. Our priorities:

- Ensure children do not unexpectedly lose Medicaid coverage during redeterminations of eligibility by implementing 12-month continuous coverage for this population,
- Increase Medicaid reimbursement for providers and implementing parity with Medicare,
- Increase access to care by improvements in coverage for telehealth visits, expanding broadband coverage to more Missouri households, and ensuring protection of a patient's medical home,
- Implement a pediatric focused quality improvement project within MO HealthNet to improve care, and
- Support funding and incentives to increase the number of pediatricians and primary care physicians in the state.

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. Following a recommended vaccine schedule provides a child's immune system with tools to stay healthy and grow into successful, healthy adults. We believe a child's medical home is the best place to discuss concerns and receive childhood immunizations. During this time of heightened attention around vaccines, it is critical to increase confidence in these important public health tools and ensure equitable access to vaccines for all children. Our priorities:

- Increase access and education on catching up children on routine childhood immunizations,
- Ensure equitable access for children and families to the COVID-19 vaccine,
- Support primary care physicians in providing vaccines in clinics,
- Increase access and funding for immunizations in schools, health clinics, federally qualified health centers, and local health departments, in partnership with primary care providers,
- Increase funding for education regarding the safety and importance of vaccines,
- Increase the usage of *Show Me Vax* by healthcare professionals for statewide comprehensive vaccination records, and
- Encourage exchange of vaccine registry information across state lines.

MENTAL HEALTH

Statement: Parents, caregivers, educators, and pediatricians are the first line of support for children and adolescents with mental health concerns. In 2021, the American Academy of Pediatrics, along with the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and the Children's Hospital Association, declared a national emergency in children's mental health as a result of the growing concern around mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic. 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 caring for children and adolescents with mental health concerns. Our priorities:

- Increase access to mental health services in schools and community-based centers for children and adolescents, especially those in crisis,
- Fund programs that provide mental health training for primary care providers,
- Support integration of mental health care into primary care medical homes,
- Increase training for educators around youth mental health needs,
- Increase funding and support during transitions in mental health care services, including an increase in the number of available in-patient beds for youth mental health services, and for wrap-around services upon discharge from in-patient or residential facilities,
- Promote the expansion and funding of trauma informed care services,
- Address workforce shortages among mental health providers to ensure children and families can access services,
- Expand telehealth services for mental health needs,
- Promote positive parenting practices, including programs which emphasize the development of safe, stable, and nurturing parent-child relationships, including self-care for the parent,
- Advocate for funding of mental health services, including suicide prevention programs, and
- Partner with community agencies, including home visitation programs, which support families in their homes, and aid in referral to other community resources.