



Alabama Chapter-American Academy of Pediatrics

2022 Legislative Agenda

2022 Legislative Priorities

We advocate for:

- *Increased vaccination rates among Alabama youth:* In light of recent declines in routine vaccinations Alabama and across the nation, it is imperative that we sustain Alabama's historically strong immunization system to prevent childhood diseases. The Chapter opposes any legislation that would create additional barriers for children to receive their recommended childhood immunizations.

- *Improving child health through adequate Medicaid and CHIP funding and Medicaid expansion:* Sustainable and permanent revenue solutions to adequately fund Medicaid and CHIP for children is a permanent priority of the Alabama Chapter-AAP. In addition, the Chapter strongly supports expanded coverage for low-income adults who don't currently qualify for Medicaid. Children whose parents have coverage have better health outcomes, and infant mortality rates have shown decline in expansion states compared to non-expansion states. For these same reasons, this year, the Chapter specifically advocates for expanding Medicaid coverage for new mothers from 60 days to 12 months postpartum.

- *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 threatens 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 AAP guidelines and recommendations for the care of children. To that end, the Chapter opposes SB 5, legislation that would criminalize practicing the standard of care for patients with gender dysphoria.

- *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.

- *Protecting children from harm:* The Chapter endorses Alabama state agencies in their efforts to protect children, including supporting the Childhood Lead Reduction Act to reduce children's exposure to toxic lead in Alabama, which leads to many harmful downstream health effects in children.

2022 Educational Priorities

- *Prevention of firearm-related injuries in children:* Firearm-related injuries are the third leading cause of death among U.S. children one to 17 years of age. Alabama is in the top five states in firearm-related death rates. The Chapter urges consideration of policy changes that would impact these statistics, such as safe storage, improving background checks, instituting red flag laws, and conforming the age to purchase assault rifles to that of handguns.

- *Support for children and families affected by COVID-19:* More and more Alabama children and youth are faced with trauma and adverse childhood experiences and COVID-19 has exacerbated those statistics. In mid-October 2021, the American Academy of Pediatrics and other national organizations declared a national emergency in children's mental health, citing the serious toll of the COVID-19 pandemic on top of existing challenges. The Chapter is partnering with the Alabama Department of Mental Health on numerous levels to mitigate these issues and looks to policymakers for their continued support.