

A 2022 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

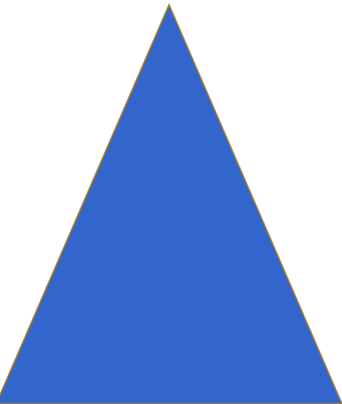
Groundbreaking research has shown that early childhood relationships and experiences—both positive and negative—have a significant impact on an individual's health, educational, and economic outcomes decades later, through adolescence and into adulthood. As a result, positively influencing a child's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

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.



children by expanding Alabama's First Class Pre-K program and ensuring funding of Medicaid and ALL Kids thus far. However, recent events including the COVID-19 pandemic 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
- Advocate for appropriate coverage for telehealth services offered through the medical home during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond



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

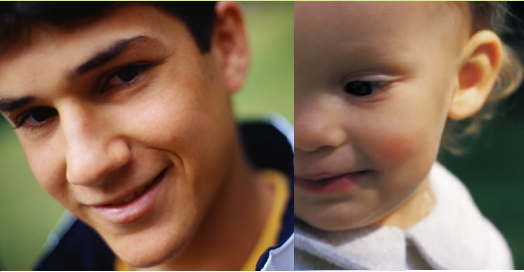
- **Help build a foundation of family wellness by increasing access to healthcare for caregivers, including expanding Medicaid and postpartum coverage**
- **Invest in programs that ensure affordable, high-quality child care for all families**
- **Support affordable and safe housing programs**
- **Expand 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

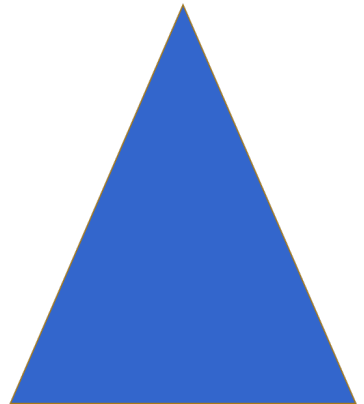
GOALS

- To create communities that are safe from violence and environmental hazards,
- 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 all children and reduce the burden of preventable disease by supporting vaccination programs and the physicians who provide vaccines
- 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 child & maternal death review



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

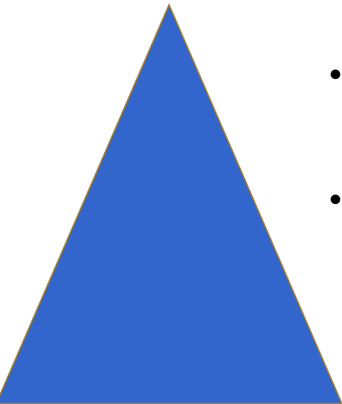
GOALS

- 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 2022 Legislative Agenda

Legislative Priorities

- **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, which leads to many harmful downstream health effects.

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 & 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 October 2021, the American Academy of Pediatrics and other organizations declared a national emergency in children's mental health, citing the serious toll of the pandemic on top of existing challenges. We are partnering with the Alabama Department of Mental Health to mitigate these issues and look to policymakers for their continued support.

Our Partners in Alabama Child Well-Being



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ChildrenFirst
Shaping public policy for Alabama's children

UAB MEDICINE
PEDIATRICS

U.S. HEALTH
CHILDREN'S & WOMEN'S HOSPITAL

 **VOICES**
FOR ALABAMA'S CHILDREN

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