



2022 PRIORITY PEDIATRIC POLICY, BUDGET & PRACTICE ISSUES

New York State American Academy of Pediatrics (NYS AAP)
A Coalition of AAP NY Chapters 1, 2 & 3

NEW YORK'S CHILDREN AND FAMILIES NEED STATE HELP NOW

NYS Must Invest in Our Children and Families

As we approach this new budget and legislative session, it is imperative that we talk about child health as a multidimensional and multidisciplinary issue.

No child can be healthy if their family is severely stressed by poverty and fear:

- if that child does not have enough to eat
- if that child does not have stable housing
- if that child is terrified that their parents will be deported
- if that child is living in a home or an environment that is slowly but surely poisoning them
- if that child does not have access to quality child care and/or educational opportunities
- if that child does not have access to the mental health care they need when and where they need it

- if that child does not have a caring, knowledgeable physician who knows them and cares deeply about their health & well-being

As we engage with our state leaders this year, we need to be clear; the time for bandaids is over. This is the year that New York must begin to truly invest in the lives of our youngest citizens and their struggling families.

We support New York State Investing in our Children and Families.

These investments include:

CHILD TAX CREDIT EXPANSION

The current credit does not include children 0-4. This makes no sense. Our families with the youngest children need the tax credit as much, if not more, than those with school age children. The Child Tax Credit must be expanded this year to include children birth to 18. And it must be updated in terms of costs that today's families encounter as they try to provide for their children.

We support a \$1,000 credit for per child for all families. This action will help keep thousands of children across our state from falling back into poverty during this challenging time as we work our way out of the pandemic. Families across our state need and deserve our support. Investing in a child tax credit is investing in the future of New York.

0-3 CONTINUOUS MEDICAID COVERAGE

The First 1,000 Days are critical to healthy brain development, physical development and social development of infants and toddlers. Having stable health coverage will help ensure that all babies have comprehensive and dependable pediatric care. It will support parents as they establish trusted relationships with their child's pediatrician/physician. The current annual re-enrollment requirement results in churning and loss of coverage. Churning creates unstable care and interrupts positive parent, child, pediatrician relationships. The cost of this improvement will be minimal. It has the potential to save dollars currently wasted in the multiple re-enrollment requirements at both the state and the insurer levels.

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In addition, NYS already covers the first year of a child on Medicaid; this critical expansion would simply add years two and three. In general, infant and toddler health care is low cost and highly efficient and effective care. This expansion can improve the health care of tens of thousands of babies across New York and improve health over the life span.

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES SUPPORT

Major investments are required to rebuild both residential and community-based children's mental health services. The current crisis is keeping children inappropriately in emergency rooms and hospital beds when what they need is residential and/or community/school based mental health services. The children's mental health service system is broken. It must be fixed with targeted investment in services and staffing. All aspects of the children's mental health program need attention and investment from screening and prevention through community and school-based services to high level psychiatric care and long and short-term residential treatment. Investments of about \$300 million will go a long way to rebuild and support a mental health system that can actually meet the needs of children across our state. What we have now is a system in crisis which cannot serve children in crisis and cannot serve families desperate to find appropriate services for their children. We can and must do better for the thousands of children across the state who are getting sicker and sicker as they wait for appropriate treatment.

POST NATAL MEDICAID COVERAGE FOR 12 MONTHS

This option is in the Governor's budget and we encourage the legislature to fully support the initiative. However, we urge to legislature to take an additional vital step and use \$24 million in state dollars to offer the same year of health coverage to our pregnant undocumented New Yorkers. Extended coverage has been shown to be effective in improving the health and mental health of the mother, and the health of the newborn and infant. We also support clear guidance to assure that the expansion is accessible, culturally competent, and equitably delivered.

REBUILDING PUBLIC HEALTH PREPARE

COVID taught us that we have allowed our Public Health infrastructure at the federal, state, county and city levels to deteriorate to the point where it was unable to do its job for us and with us. The influx of emergency federal dollars helped our public health departments at every level to rise to the task against all odds. But Public Health is not a sometime service. It is a vital public service that must be ready to respond to all health threats, from epidemics to environmental health threats, from immunizations to clean water and clean homes. We support increasing support beyond the dollars in the Governor's proposed budget to include \$30.3 million specifically targeted to build the capacity of all levels of the Health Department to actually implement the work required to lower the lead level in all child focused environments.

EXCLUDED WORKERS FUND

It is imperative that the legislature refund the Excluded Workers Fund. Undocumented families have no access to unemployment or to federally funded financial support. These are also the families that have found it most difficult to return to the jobs that once supported their families. Jobs in the service sector, which has been so drastically hit by the pandemic, are the ones that have been slowest to return. The state has an obligation to support these families during this time until we have our service industry humming again. The Excluded Workers Fund was a good idea when it was created. It remains a vital lifeline for undocumented families as we unwind from the pandemic and restructure our service industries across the state. Until the restaurants, hotels, and other service industries rebound, the undocumented workers who kept these businesses afloat during the good times, need state help now.

COVERAGE FOR ALL

We support the call for a state only program that provides access to affordable health coverage for all New Yorkers regardless of immigration status. Coverage for All has the potential to improve the health care and health care access for more than 150,000 New Yorkers. Many research studies have clearly proven that when parents have access to health insurance, they are more likely to use appropriate and regular health care for their children. Therefore, providing an option for parent to have coverage will improve the likelihood that their children will have regular health care.



ELIMINATE THE MEDICAL GLOBAL CAP

The Cap is an artifice of some very lean times in New York, and a demonization of Medicaid. It is no longer needed, nor is it the most effective method to control costs. The Cap interferes with a modern approach to health care delivery and a clear commitment to address the social determinants of health. If our goal is, and it should be, that all New Yorkers have access to affordable, accessible and equitably delivered health care, then we need to eliminate the Cap and create a future of universal, quality and accessible and culturally competent and equitably delivered health care for all.

CHILD CARE, EARLY INTERVENTION AND HOME VISITING

Although there are considerable investments in the Governor's budget proposal, much more needs to be done to create universal access to quality accessible Child Care, Early Intervention Services and Evidence Based Home Visiting programs for all families who need these services.

Families with young children need access to child care to get back to work as we recover from the pandemic. **Child Care Providers** need state investments that can raise their rates without raising the costs to families. The state needs to subsidize child care across New York with a total federal and state investment of \$5 billion from all sources. Child care is a vital service that is crucial to our economic recovery.

Early Intervention Services across the state have been eviscerated.

Many providers have severely cut services or closed completely. In parts of the state there are no services at all. To build back and strengthen Early Intervention Services, the state must invest enough to raise the rates for all Early Intervention Programs by at least 10%. EI services are vital to assure that children challenged with developmental and physical delays have the evidenced based development support services they need to achieve their highest potential.

Evidence Based Home Visiting Services have been proven to strengthen families and improve the health and wellbeing of both parents and children. These programs can provide a positive glide path for new parents dealing with the stressors of a new baby, and sometimes a new way of life, with or without work outside of the home. Home Visiting can support parents learning new parenting skills, improve child development assessments, attach families to needed services, like needed housing, health care, early intervention, mental health services, job training or job search, and most often simply offer a friendly, knowledgeable, nonjudgmental "friend" for new parents. Although there is additional funding in the budget for Home Visiting to serve approximately 1,600 additional families, which is a good thing, the expansion funds are not nearly enough to expand the service to all families who could benefit. We recommend state financial support to allow the program to take the first steps toward universal availability.

EDUCATION

We fully support the significant increase in education funding. We are hopeful that the additional dollars will be laser focused on improving the classroom experiences in the poorest districts and the lowest performing schools. These new dollars must be used to level the playing field, not simply to refill the coffers of already well-off districts across the state.

ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES

The budget supports many environmental improvements for all the families of New York. We are fully supportive of the additional investments in the Bond Act and the development of alternative sources of energy. We also want to see full funding for removing lead from all children's environments and additional investments in removing toxins from all children's products.

The New York State American Academy of Pediatrics looks forward to working with the Governor's Office and the Legislature to ensure that all children in New York, regardless of circumstances, have a strong and equal chance to grow up healthy, educated and positive about their place in their families, communities and their state.

