

American Academy of Pediatrics

Virginia Chapter



A State Child Health Policy Agenda for 2025

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 Virginia as a leading state for children.



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Policy Goals

PROMOTE HEALTHY CHILDREN

All children, adolescents, and young adults from birth to the age of 26 years must have access to the highest-quality health care, so they can thrive throughout their lifespan. Policymakers must ensure that all children, regardless of their race, ethnicity, income, family composition or immigration status have:

1. equitable, non-discriminatory access to affordable and high-quality health care coverage,
2. insurance with comprehensive, pediatric-appropriate benefits,
3. access to needed primary and subspecialty pediatric care and mental health services, and
4. comprehensive, family-centered care in a medical home.

PROMOTE SECURE FAMILIES

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

- work that provides a stable and adequate income and family-friendly benefits, including paid family medical and sick leave,
- safe, secure, and non-discriminatory housing,
- affordable and safe high-quality childcare,
- access to adequate, healthy, nutritious foods throughout the year, and
- resources to support family placement and permanency within the child welfare system.

PROMOTE STRONG COMMUNITIES

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

- are safe from violence and environmental hazards,
- provide high-quality early education, especially in segregated urban, suburban, and rural communities,
- support public health systems that protect children from infectious diseases and support maternal and child health, 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 racism as a public health crisis and work towards reducing racism through interdisciplinary partnerships with organizations that have developed campaigns against racism,
- fund and support public health and health services to help children grow into healthy adults,
- address environmental health and climate change issues that affect children, and
- address factors that make some children more vulnerable than others, such as race, ethnicity, religion, immigration status, sexual orientation or gender identity, and disability.

Advocacy Agenda

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Medicaid Payment Parity

- Ensure 100% Medicaid-to-Medicare payment parity for pediatric services
 - Strengthens the pediatric workforce by addressing pay disparities
 - Incentivizes more pediatricians to accept Medicaid, critical for families in rural and underserved areas
 - Your constituents gain better access to timely, high-quality care for their children

School Health Access

- Fund a full-time school nurse in every public school
 - Extends preventive care and chronic condition management directly where kids are
 - Proven to reduce ER visits and absenteeism, issues parents and schools care deeply about
- Universal free school meals (breakfast & lunch)
 - Reduces both food insecurity for families, and rates of childhood obesity
 - Invests in children's learning, behavior, and health

Maternal & Infant Health

- Require insurance coverage for human donor milk in medically necessary cases
 - Backed by science, improves survival and outcomes for fragile infants
 - A cost-effective, lifesaving intervention when birth parents can't provide milk
- Expand coverage for lactation consultation and support services
 - Promotes breastfeeding success, infant health, and maternal wellbeing
 - A tangible step toward reducing disparities in maternal health outcomes

Rural Access & Telehealth

- Modernize reimbursement to include audio-only telehealth
 - Keeps care accessible for families without broadband or smartphones
- Allow telemedicine across state lines for established patients
 - Essential for college students and mobile families staying connected to trusted providers in Virginia
 - Keeps continuity of care without creating administrative burdens

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Mental & Behavioral Health

- Increase Medicaid reimbursement for pediatric mental health services done by primary care pediatricians
 - Supports early intervention and access to therapy in a time of rising youth mental health need
 - Helps build a pipeline of providers and reduce burnout among child psychiatrists and therapists

Immunizations

- Fair reimbursement aligned with AAP recommendations
 - Ensures vaccine availability in all communities
- Combat vaccine misinformation through trusted, science-based messaging
 - Protects public health, especially in schools and childcare settings
- Uphold VDH school-entry immunization requirements based on evidence, not politics
 - Keeps schools safe and learning uninterrupted

Government Leadership for Kids

- (Re)Establish a Governor's Children's Cabinet
 - A cross-agency body that prioritizes early childhood, education, and pediatric health
 - Include pediatricians as advisors to ensure child health voices inform statewide policy