

Blueprint for Children



A state Child Health Policy Agenda for 2026-2028

Priorities and recommendations to improve child health and well-being, achieve health equity, optimize lifespan outcomes, strengthen families, support communities, and elevate Maine as a leading state for children.



2026–28 Advocacy Agenda

Maine AAP consists of 300+ pediatricians, pediatric subspecialists and child health providers working together, across the State, to better the lives of Maine's youth. We advocate locally, statewide, and nationally for improved child health.

Our 2026-28 Blueprint for Children shares our current goals!



**Improve Healthcare
Access for Every
Maine Child**

**Safeguard Children
for Gun Violence &
Accidents**



**Prevent & Reduce
Youth Substance
Use and Addiction**



**Build Strong and
Supported Families**

**Nurture Every Mind
& Improve School
Health**



**Alleviate Childhood
Poverty & Food
Insecurity**



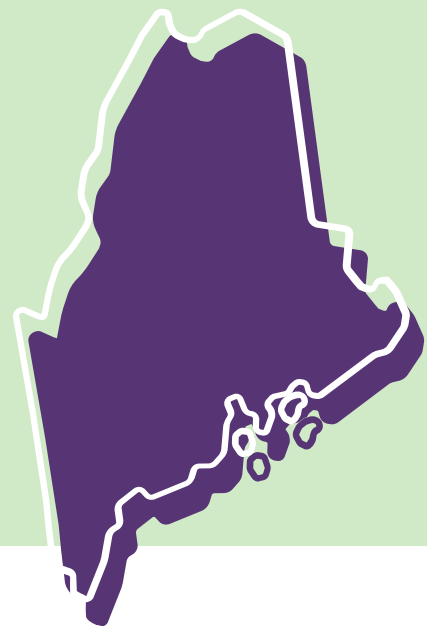
**Protect Against
Preventable
Disease**

**Champion Health
Equity**



**Create Healthy,
Sustainable
Environments**

Our Blueprint



Improve Access to Quality Healthcare for Every Maine Child



Every child in Maine deserves the best start. That means access to high quality healthcare, from birth to young adulthood. Unfortunately, many face barriers: limited insurance, high costs, and geographic disparities. We are advocating for change, ensuring mental, oral, and physical health services are available to Maine children up to age 26. It's an investment in our future to ensure healthy physical and mental development for every child.

WE ADVOCATE FOR EVERY CHILD'S HEALTH BY FIGHTING FOR:

- Affordable, high-quality coverage to close the healthcare access gap and expand coverage equitably, especially for pregnant people and children.
- Comprehensive benefits that require insurance to support children's needs.
- Insurance coverage of evidence-based treatments for chronic conditions.
- Increased access and fair reimbursement for mental and dental health services and school-based counseling.
- Availability of easy crisis evaluation referrals and trauma-informed care.
- Comprehensive, coordinated, family centered and trauma-informed care provided in a primary care practice/medical home.
- Increase in-state mental and behavioral residential treatment services.
- Investments in the healthcare workforce, including improved reimbursement rates and increased residency opportunities, especially for rural communities.

2 Safeguard Children from Gun Violence and Accidents

WE PRIORITIZE EVIDENCE-BASED GUN SAFETY POLICIES TO BUILD A SAFER, HEALTHIER FUTURE FOR MAINE'S CHILDREN:

- Strengthen firearm safe storage laws to prevent firearm injuries and deaths.
- Support firearm safety measures, such as stronger background checks and waiting periods on all firearm sales.
- Ban assault-style weapons and high capacity magazines, and raise the firearm and ammunition purchase age to 21.
- Fund gun violence research, education, and school safety training.
- Implement non-traumatic, age-appropriate school safety drills.
- Oppose arming school staff and support research-backed security measures.



Firearms are now the leading cause of death for children and young adults. All children should feel safe in school. Evidence-based solutions that prioritize prevention and intervention allows children to thrive in safe and healthy environments.

3 Prevent and Reduce Youth Substance Use & Addiction



To build a healthier future for Maine's children, substance use and addiction must be addressed. We must prevent the use of nicotine, THC, and other harmful substances that can have impacts of mental and physical health, and invest in treatment programs for youth.

WE PREVENT YOUTH SUBSTANCE USE & ADDICTION, AND HELP YOUTH STRUGGLING WITH SUBSTANCE USE:

- Emphasize evidence-based policies to reduce youth substance use and prioritize harm reduction strategies.
- Restrict nicotine product use in public spaces and while driving with others.
- Fund evidence-based drug education and develop public service ads about the risks of substance use.
- Provide opiate prescription education and training for pain management, including evidence-based recommendations and alternatives.
- Expand access to treatment programs for substance use disorders, including opioid use disorder.

4 Build Strong and Supported Families

WE URGE DECISION-MAKERS TO PRIORITIZE STRONG FAMILIES AND HEALTHY CHILDHOODS:

- Advocate for family-friendly benefits for Maine workers.
- Ensure safe, affordable housing for all.
- Invest in accessible, high-quality childcare that is available in all regions.
- Expand access to comprehensive substance use disorder treatments for parents.
- Proactively address causes of intimate partner violence and child abuse and neglect.
- Support families with early childhood resources and strengthen parenting skills and family well-being.
- Increase reproductive healthcare access.
- Prioritize in-family reunification and lasting foster care placements.



Raising healthy children takes a village. That is why we're partnering with parents and communities to build support systems for all families. We advocate for policies that strengthen families, ensure access to vital resources, and provide tools for raising resilient kids. When families thrive, children flourish.

5 Nurture Every Mind



Equitable school funding should foster opportunity for all children, regardless of zip code or income. Early childhood education for every child builds a strong foundation for future success. By investing in education, we invest in healthier, brighter futures for Maine kids.

WE SUPPORT COMPREHENSIVE AND FAIR EDUCATIONAL ACCESS, AND HEALTHY AND SAFE SCHOOLS:

- Increase state funding and fairer revenue sharing to promote educational equity.
- Provide universal Pre-K and expand Head Start for early success.
- Invest in childcare and educator workforce, including access to trainings.
- Offer equitable access to extracurriculars, athletics, arts, and STEM activities.
- Ensure counseling services in every school.
- Expand home broadband availability for digital access and learning.
- Reduce in-school phone/device use.
- Normalize age-appropriate health education for all children and adolescents.
- Ensure schools have resources needed to protect student health, such as stock albuterol and rescue medications.

6 Alleviate Childhood Poverty and Food Insecurity

WE SUPPORT EVIDENCE-BASED SOLUTIONS TO CHILDHOOD POVERTY AND END HUNGER:

- End regressive taxes and prioritize policies that reduce child poverty.
- Make permanent increases to the child tax credit and earned income tax credit.
- Support policies and investment in affordable, quality child care and early childhood education.
- Ensure living wages and expand income support for families with children.
- Invest in job retraining and efforts to address poverty and housing instability.
- Secure and improve WIC, TANF, heat assistance and other support programs to address poverty and food insecurity.
- Promote access to affordable healthcare and the development of innovative solutions to address health care needs for children and families.



An estimate 35,000 Maine kids faced poverty – we aim to make a difference. Systemic issues of racial inequality and discrimination, climate change, and inadequate healthcare and economic opportunities impact child poverty and hunger as well as kids experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity.

7 Protect Against Disease



Protection against diseases depends on access to the tools and resources needed to stay healthy, including vaccines, health education, and preventive care. Many families and communities face barriers to these protections, increasing their risk of illness and widening health disparities.

WE ARE DEDICATED TO PROTECTING AGAINST INFECTIOUS AND PREVENTABLE DISEASES:

- Promote public health interventions that prevent disease, including community water fluoridation and immunizations.
- Expand access to recommended vaccines.
- Ensure access to families and patients with accurate, evidence-based information about vaccines.
- Defending school vaccine requirements and preventing non-medical exemptions.
- Strengthen outbreak preparedness, prevention, and response efforts.
- Increase access to primary care, dental care, and preventive health services.
- Increase family and patient education on disease risk and prevention measures.
- Advocate for comprehensive insurance coverage of preventive care and evidence-based strategies.

8 Champion Health Equity

WE SUPPORT BRIDGING THE HEALTH EQUITY GAP AND WORK WITH POLICYMAKERS TO:

- Dismantle barriers to equitable care.
- Guarantee healthcare, food, and housing for all children living in Maine.
- Foster safe and inclusive schools for every child.
- Ensure access to all appropriate mental and physical health care for children and teens.
- Defend the right of youth to participate fully in sports and other activities without discrimination.
- Champion the potential of children with special health care needs.
- Combat childhood obesity using a public health approach, including programs for better nutrition and physical activity.
- Continue the Maine Lead Program and fight pollution by including monitoring and limiting exposure to harmful chemicals.
- Ensure every family has access to the education and tools needed to prevent, manage and treat childhood obesity.



Health equity ensures everyone has a fair and just opportunity to attain their highest level of health, regardless of their social, economic, or demographic background. Marginalized communities frequently encounter barriers to achieving their full, healthy potential. Additionally, there are health issues, such as obesity, exposure to environmental hazards that have a disproportionate impact on certain communities.

9 Create Healthy, Sustainable Environments



Environmental health focuses on the factors surrounding us that affect health and well-being. Ensuring healthy environments for all communities helps prevent illness, reduce health disparities, and support overall quality of life.

- Advocate for children in communities disproportionately affected by environmental health issues and climate change.
- Support legislation for cleaner water, land, and air for all.
- Support & monitor research on chemicals and toxins suspected to have developmental, endocrine, and other negative health effects.
- Support policies that mitigate climate change, and reduce the impacts on children and communities.
- Ensure access to public conserved land, especially for underserved communities.
- Expand education for families and providers on the increasing impacts of climate change on children.