

How the Next President Can Build a Foundation for a Healthy Future: Improving Children's Lives

Benard P. Dreyer, MD, FAAP,^a Fernando Stein, MD, FAAP, FCCM,^b Karen Remley, MD, MBA, MPH, FAAP^c

In a tumultuous and unpredictable election year, Americans selected Donald Trump as our 45th president. Mr Trump's approach to policymaking is still unknown, and his positions on certain issues do not follow the typical partisan patterns within American politics. However, Mr Trump has expressed support for family-oriented policies, including paid family leave and child care subsidies. His administration may present an opportunity to continue working on efforts to provide children with the essential elements needed to lead healthy and productive lives. The priorities and policy decisions President Trump takes will have a lasting impact on our nation's future.

To help guide these decisions, in advance of the election, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) laid out a comprehensive plan for the federal government to give children, families, communities, and the nation a solid foundation for the future.

The Academy's plan, *Blueprint for Children: How the Next President Can Build a Foundation for a Healthy Future*, is grounded in the belief that society's health depends on its children's well-being.¹ It reflects the AAP's commitment to programs and policies that improve the lives of children and families so they can achieve their full potential. The *Blueprint* contains a high-level policy vision as well as many specific administrative and legislative recommendations relevant to 24 federal agencies and departments that can influence the health and

well-being of children and families. It was developed in consultation with AAP leaders and reviewed by numerous colleague organizations, 11 of which endorsed it (the Academic Pediatric Association, the American Pediatric Society, America's Promise Alliance, the Association of Medical School Pediatric Department Chairs, the Children's Partnership, Family Voices, the National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners, the Pediatric Policy Council, the Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine, the Society for Pediatric Research, and ZERO TO THREE). The *Blueprint* was presented last September at a panel discussion featuring a range of thought-leaders. The archived event webcast is available at aap.org/blueprint, along with the complete document.¹

Almost half of children in the United States live in poverty or near poverty.² Lifting families out of poverty and ameliorating its impact on children is critical for the future of our country. The federal government has existing programs that move millions of children out of poverty, as well as protect them from the negative effects of poverty on their health and well-being.³⁻⁵ These programs must be maintained, strengthened, and expanded.

Childhood is a critical time of rapid physical, cognitive, emotional, and social development that sets the stage for good health and successful learning and relationships. Early childhood relationships

FREE

^aPresident, American Academy of Pediatrics, Elk Grove Village, Illinois, and Department of Pediatrics, New York University School of Medicine, New York, New York;

^bPresident-Elect, American Academy of Pediatrics, Elk Grove Village, Illinois, and Department of Pediatrics, Baylor College of Medicine, Houston, Texas; and ^cCEO/Executive Vice President, American Academy of Pediatrics, Elk Grove Village, Illinois, and Department of Pediatrics, Eastern Virginia Medical School

DOI: 10.1542/peds.2016-3611

Accepted for publication Oct 28, 2016

Address correspondence to Benard P. Dreyer, MD, 564 1st Ave, Apt 23 E, New York, NY 10016-6469.

E-mail: benard.dreyer@nyumc.org

PEDIATRICS (ISSN Numbers: Print, 0031-4005; Online, 1098-4275).

Copyright © 2017 by the American Academy of Pediatrics

FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE: The authors have indicated they have no financial relationships relevant to this article to disclose.

FUNDING: No external funding.

POTENTIAL CONFLICT OF INTEREST: The authors have indicated they have no potential conflicts of interest to disclose.

To cite: Dreyer BP, Stein F, Remley K. How the Next President Can Build a Foundation for a Healthy Future: Improving Children's Lives. *Pediatrics*. 2017;139(1):e20163611

and experiences—positive and negative—significantly affect individual health, educational, and economic outcomes through adolescence and into adulthood.⁶ Supporting children as they develop, rather than trying to identify and remediate intractable problems later in life, is critical to building healthy adults. Comprehensive and long-term investments in early life experiences that promote resilience and provide a strong start yield significant returns and save money on increased health care expenses and other societal costs.

The *Blueprint* calls for the federal government to invest in, coordinate, and focus on 4 key themes: promoting healthy children, supporting secure families, building strong communities, and ensuring the United States is a leading nation for children.

HEALTHY CHILDREN

Child health is a strong predictor of adult health. Lack of access to health care threatens the physical, mental, and social well-being of children and their caregivers. The next administration should ensure that all children, regardless of immigration status, have access to high-quality health care, including specialty care. Almost half of US children receive health insurance from Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). Therefore, the next administration must ensure that Medicaid is not subject to payment caps, block grants, or other structural harms, and CHIP is reauthorized and strengthened. Among other recommendations, the *Blueprint* calls for health plans to offer comprehensive, well-defined, pediatric-specific essential health benefits packages. It also calls for support for programs that promote maternal and reproductive health such as comprehensive prenatal care, the Title X Family Planning program,

the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program, and confidential access to contraception for adolescents.

SECURE FAMILIES

A safe, nurturing environment that includes steady income, stable housing, adequate nutrition, and social-emotional support helps children thrive. The next administration should embrace a multigeneration perspective that values the formation of stable, responsive, and nurturing relationships. The *Blueprint* recommendations include strengthening several effective federal programs that lift families out of poverty, including minimum wage increases, job training, family-friendly benefits, and tax credits (such as the Earned Income Tax Credit and the Child Tax Credit).⁷ It also calls for increased support for social programs that provide nutrition, housing, child care, and parenting support to families in need.

STRONG COMMUNITIES

Communities play a vital role in safeguarding public health, mitigating social disparities, and fostering a resilient society. The next administration should ensure that all children and families are safe in their communities and have equal access to opportunities, regardless of race, ethnicity, or income. The *Blueprint* recommendations include policies to reduce the dangers of violence, environmental toxins, and preventable infectious diseases; to make sure every child has access to high-quality early learning programs; and to improve the built environment.⁸

A LEADING NATION FOR CHILDREN

The next administration should maintain the United States' role as a leading nation for children

by advancing child health not only within our country but internationally. The *Blueprint* recommends increased efforts to address climate change, protect civil rights and human rights, and promote maternal and child health globally. It also calls for comprehensive immigration reform, expanded investments in pediatric research to improve child well-being, and the development of innovative therapies for pediatric diseases.

This nation has made progress in protecting and nurturing children and expanding opportunities for all. President Trump must preserve these successes, build on them, and create the strongest possible foundation for future generations. Achieving the *Blueprint's* goals will require creating new programs, enhancing existing policies, and coordinating federal programs that affect children and families. That is why the *Blueprint* calls on the next administration, in its first 100 days, to direct all federal agencies to review how their activities can proactively work together to improve children's lives. Children deserve a bold agenda that prioritizes their needs and places them at the center of our federal policy decisions. The *Blueprint* offers such a plan, and it is up to us to help our nation's leaders put it into practice.

ABBREVIATION

AAP: American Academy of Pediatrics

REFERENCES

1. American Academy of Pediatrics. *Blueprint for Children: How the Next President Can Build a Foundation for a Healthy Future*. 2016. Available at: www.aap.org/blueprint. Accessed October 26, 2016
2. Proctor BD, Semega JL, Kollar MA. *U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population*

- Reports, P60-256(RV): Income and Poverty in the United States: 2015.* Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office; 2016
3. *Federal Low-Income Programs: Multiple Programs Target Diverse Populations and Needs.* Washington, DC: US Government Accountability Office; 2015. Available at: www.gao.gov/assets/680/671779.pdf. Accessed October 27, 2016
 4. Marr C, Huang CC, Sherman A, et al. EITC and Child Tax Credit Promote Work, Reduce Poverty, and Support Children's Development, Research Finds. Available at: www.cbpp.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/6-26-12tax.pdf. Accessed October 27, 2016
 5. Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. Chart Book: SNAP Helps Struggling Families Put Food on the Table. 2016. Available at: www.cbpp.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/3-13-12fa-chartbook.pdf. Accessed October 27, 2016
 6. Felitti VJ, Anda RF, Nordenberg D, et al. Relationship of childhood abuse and household dysfunction to many of the leading causes of death in adults. The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study. *Am J Prev Med.* 1998;14(4): 245–258
 7. AAP Council on Community Pediatrics. Poverty and child health in the United States—policy statement. *Pediatrics.* 2016;137(4):e20160339
 8. Council on Environmental Health. Prevention of childhood lead toxicity. *Pediatrics.* 2016;138(1): e20161493

How the Next President Can Build a Foundation for a Healthy Future: Improving Children's Lives

Benard P. Dreyer, Fernando Stein and Karen Remley

Pediatrics 2017;139;

DOI: 10.1542/peds.2016-3611 originally published online December 22, 2016;

Updated Information & Services

including high resolution figures, can be found at:
<http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/139/1/e20163611>

References

This article cites 3 articles, 2 of which you can access for free at:
<http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/139/1/e20163611.full#ref-list-1>

Subspecialty Collections

This article, along with others on similar topics, appears in the following collection(s):

Advocacy

http://classic.pediatrics.aappublications.org/cgi/collection/advocacy_sub

Federal Policy

http://classic.pediatrics.aappublications.org/cgi/collection/federal_policy_sub

Legislation

http://classic.pediatrics.aappublications.org/cgi/collection/legislation_sub

Permissions & Licensing

Information about reproducing this article in parts (figures, tables) or in its entirety can be found online at:
<https://shop.aap.org/licensing-permissions/>

Reprints

Information about ordering reprints can be found online:
<http://classic.pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/reprints>

Pediatrics is the official journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics. A monthly publication, it has been published continuously since . Pediatrics is owned, published, and trademarked by the American Academy of Pediatrics, 141 Northwest Point Boulevard, Elk Grove Village, Illinois, 60007. Copyright © 2017 by the American Academy of Pediatrics. All rights reserved. Print ISSN: .

American Academy of Pediatrics

DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN™



PEDIATRICS®

OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRICS

How the Next President Can Build a Foundation for a Healthy Future: Improving Children's Lives

Benard P. Dreyer, Fernando Stein and Karen Remley

Pediatrics 2017;139;

DOI: 10.1542/peds.2016-3611 originally published online December 22, 2016;

The online version of this article, along with updated information and services, is
located on the World Wide Web at:

<http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/139/1/e20163611>

Pediatrics is the official journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics. A monthly publication, it has been published continuously since . Pediatrics is owned, published, and trademarked by the American Academy of Pediatrics, 141 Northwest Point Boulevard, Elk Grove Village, Illinois, 60007. Copyright © 2017 by the American Academy of Pediatrics. All rights reserved. Print ISSN:

American Academy of Pediatrics

DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN™

