

New Resources and Strategies to Advance the AAP's Values of Diversity, Inclusion, and Health Equity

Fernando Stein, MD, FAAP,^a Karen Remley, MD, MBA, MPH, FAAP,^b Danielle Laraque-Arena, MD, FAAP,^c DeWayne M. Pursley, MD, MPH, FAAP^{d,e}

The mission of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) has always been to attain optimal health and well-being for all children. In recent decades, however, our understanding of the composition of “all children” has changed, and it will continue changing well into the future. By 2020, more than half of all US children will be racial or ethnic minorities; by 2044, no single racial or ethnic group will comprise a majority of the nation's population.¹ There is also a growing understanding of the wide variety of children's lives and experiences and the needs of those who face social disparities; have special needs; are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning; or who experience adverse childhood experiences and toxic stress.²

The response to children's varied life experiences and needs is complicated by the fact that these are perilous times for our nation's children, who face increasing insecurity and challenges as they strive to develop and grow. Structural drivers of social disparities and income inequality are deepening and are harming children, their families, and our communities. These pressures undermine our ability to fulfill the Academy's mission and must be countered by vigorous efforts to foster a culture of healing and acceptance.

As announced last year, the AAP stands ready to answer these challenges and actively protect the health of all children, adolescents, and young

adults. Our response includes a variety of activities, resources, and strategies that are designed to help children grow up in a world that cherishes and nurtures them, to foster safe environments that are free from bias and discrimination for all of our stakeholders, and to deepen the Academy's long-standing commitment to diversity and inclusion.

The Academy is strongly reaffirming what is known about normative behavior. Humans are a social species; inclusion is the natural inclination for both children and adults. At the lowest levels of learning, and in their earliest years, children do not perceive differences between one another. Intolerance and bias must, therefore, be taught to be incorporated into an individual's worldview.

The Academy is also expressly building nurturing and inclusive environments that treasure diversity and embrace the uniqueness of every child and each of us as pediatricians, pediatric medical subspecialists, and pediatric surgical specialists.

By clearly articulating our long-standing organizational commitment to our core values of promoting diversity, fostering inclusion, and advancing health equity for all, the AAP grounds these efforts as part of a larger agenda for our work. As part of this agenda, the leadership is thinking expansively and proactively about the Academy's role as the leading voice for children and as a learning organization. Diversity, inclusion,

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^aTexas Children's Hospital, Houston, Texas; ^bAmerican Academy of Pediatrics, Itasca, Illinois; ^cState University of New York Upstate Medical University, Syracuse, New York; ^dBeth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, Boston, Massachusetts; and ^eHarvard Medical School, Harvard University, Boston, Massachusetts

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Address correspondence to Karen Remley, MD, MBA, MPH, FAAP, American Academy of Pediatrics, 345 Park Blvd, Itasca, IL 60143. E-mail: kremley@aap.org

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and the elimination of bias are key aspects of this agenda.

Within this larger agenda, we will continue to model a forward-looking focus on the health of all children that is clearly reflected in the Academy's policies, leadership priorities, and organizational activities, including health care delivery, training, and workforce development. We will also continue to equip all of our pediatric stakeholders with resources and strategies to actively address these issues and improve care for children and their families.

These resources and strategic activities include the AAP Task Force on Diversity and Inclusion; the AAP Task Force on Addressing Bias and Discrimination; the Provisional Section on Minority Health, Equity, and Inclusion; and the new Diversity and Inclusion Statement and Member Anti-Harassment Policy. These resources are an extension of the Academy's fervent commitment to advance social justice, fight discrimination and intolerance, and

celebrate the diversity of all children and families.

From its founding, the Academy has been devoted to advancing the medical and social needs of children as a distinct population with its own health care needs. The explicit focus, expressed in the new resources and activities, reflects our mission to provide the best care for children and to treasure their differences in race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, socioeconomic status, and other attributes. It reflects the fact that the Academy, its members, and leaders represent the full tapestry of the life of America's children. It is an expression of our call to speak for children and improve all aspects of their well-being by actively opposing intolerance, bigotry, and discrimination.

We are very proud of this work. We welcome everyone who cares for children to help us reflect these critical values in the best possible way. We invite the Academy's 66 000

members to actively participate in our efforts to protect the health of all children and to advance the Academy's mission in our daily work, health care system, and communities at large. (Learn more about these efforts at <https://www.aap.org/en-us/about-the-aap/aap-facts/AAP-Agenda-for-Children-Strategic-Plan/Pages/AAP-Agenda-for-Children-Strategic-Plan.aspx>.)

ABBREVIATION

AAP: American Academy of Pediatrics

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