

Dr. Kraft: AAP work, values a source of pride

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Editor's note: *The [2018 AAP National Conference & Exhibition](#) will take place from Nov. 2-6 in Orlando.*

The Academy's values and commitment to child health were put to the test this year by numerous challenges, including gun violence, family separation at the border, and the rise of opioid addiction and e-cigarette use.

"The Academy has taken on some of the largest national health challenges of our time, and we've done so in a way we can be proud of," said Colleen A. Kraft, M.D., M.B.A., FAAP, who shared how the AAP tackled these challenges, with gun violence foremost among them.

"We renewed our call for a public health approach to keeping our children safe," said Dr. Kraft, recalling the mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in which student survivors spoke out against turning classrooms into war zones.

To stem the violence, the AAP launched the Gun Safety and Injury Prevention Initiative to bring together experts. In addition, Dr. Kraft shared AAP-backed firearm safety reforms that could co-exist with the Second Amendment.

"We can do this and we must do this because America will never be a healthy nation if we continue to be a violent one," she said.

The Academy also turned its efforts to the southern border and the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS's) policy to separate parents and children to deter families from migrating to the U.S. After five letters to the DHS secretary outlining the harmful effects of this practice on child health, coupled with nearly 250 media interviews by pediatricians stressing the potential for toxic stress, DHS reversed the policy.

Dr. Kraft acknowledged that hundreds of immigrant children still are housed in detention facilities with their families. "Immigrant children are still children. And the Academy will continue to oppose any policy that exposes them to conditions that threaten their health."

She touched on other social issues the AAP is addressing, including the rise in neonatal abstinence syndrome tied to the opioid epidemic, the popularity of e-cigarettes among teens, teen depression, and the battles of trans- and gender-diverse youths.

"This past year has shown me that our work and our values are not just a source of pride for us, but a source of hope for children and families," said Dr. Kraft. "We never stood down, we never gave in and we never gave up."

For more coverage of the 2018 AAP National Conference & Exhibition visit <http://www.aapublications.org/content/aap-national-conference-2018> and follow @AAPNews on *Twitter* and *Facebook*.

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