

From cover to cover: a look inside AAP Blueprint for next administration

October 27, 2016

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Article type: [Washington Report](#)

Topics: [Advocacy](#)

At the height of the campaign season and amid proposals from the presidential candidates impacting children and families, the Academy released its transition plan for the next administration, *Blueprint for Children: How the Next President Can Build a Foundation for a Healthy Future*.

Hours after the release, the Academy hosted a widely attended — both in-person and online — expert panel discussion in Washington, D.C., bringing together child health thought leaders to talk about many of the themes addressed in the *Blueprint*.

The Academy approached the process of developing the nearly 60-page document as an opportunity to guide the federal government on how it can best improve children's health and to put forward a vision for how the next president can lay a strong groundwork for the future.

The plan outlines specific child health goals and actionable policy recommendations for the country's leaders. In addition, the *Blueprint* details recommendations for 24 federal agencies and departments, highlighting the Academy's priorities for their work focused on children's health. Ten leading health and medical organizations had offered their endorsements of the Academy's effort as of Oct. 1.

Promotion of the *Blueprint* and its child health policy agenda also will be critical after Election Day when the 45th president begins his or her transition and outlines priorities for the country. Recognizing this critical window for influence, the *Blueprint* urges the next administration, in its first 100 days, to direct federal agencies to conduct a comprehensive review of their activities. This review includes how agencies can maintain progress and proactively work to promote healthy children, support secure families, build strong communities and ensure the United States is a leading nation for children.



AAP CEO/Executive Vice President Karen Remley, M.D., M.B.A., M.P.H., FAAP, shares the Blueprint with the audience at the panel event Speaking Up for Children: A Conversation About Child Health in the Next Administration.

As the first theme addressed in the document, “Healthy Children” draws attention to the importance of high-quality, affordable, accessible health insurance. The *Blueprint* points out how Medicaid and the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP), combined with the Affordable Care Act, have brought the uninsured rate among children to a record low.

Yet, the *Blueprint* acknowledges that about 6% of U.S. children lack health insurance. Furthermore, issues such as narrow networks, shortages of pediatric subspecialists and provider payment inequities between Medicaid and other public programs continue to create barriers for those trying to access care.

The plan outlines several policy recommendations aimed at ensuring all children, regardless of their immigration status, can access health care designed to meet their needs. Renewing and strengthening CHIP, which has funding set to expire in 2017, is at the top of the list.

Secure families

In the next section, the transition plan emphasizes the need for the federal government to embrace a “multi-generational perspective” that is built on the fact that in order to promote healthy children, the country must support secure families. Children thrive when they are raised in a safe and nurturing environment and in a family who is equipped to meet their needs.

The issue of poverty takes center stage in this section, as its impacts on children are significant and can be lifelong, with profound negative consequences for health, development, school achievement and future employment.

Goals outlined for the next administration include ensuring all families have work that provides a stable and adequate income with family-friendly benefits, safe and secure housing, access to nutritious food all year, affordable and safe child care, and parenting skills training.

The *Blueprint’s* policy recommendations focus on the need to expand and strengthen programs that help lift families out of poverty, including but not limited to the Earned Income Tax Credit, the Child Tax Credit, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, and the Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting program.

Strong communities

“Strong communities are the building blocks for secure families and healthy children,” the transition plan states. In this section, the plan offers a comprehensive look at how a community’s physical environment can impact the children and families who live there.

The community of Flint, Mich., and the children who have been exposed to lead in their drinking water is highlighted to show how the country’s aging infrastructure can have a devastating impact on its citizens.

To ensure a child’s health is not determined by his or her ZIP code, the *Blueprint* calls on the next president to ensure communities are safe and free from social disparities. To do this, the plan offers policy recommendations to address gun violence, increase access to early learning programs, strengthen federal laws to ensure a clean environment, and support vaccination efforts and emergency preparedness.

Leading nation

The final section of the *Blueprint* provides an overview of how the U.S. can and should maintain and elevate child health and well-being as a national priority.

The focus is on how the federal government can provide for the future by investing now, whether in pediatric research, funding for proven federal programs, new therapies for pediatric diseases or global health efforts. The plan also urges the next president to address factors that can make some children more vulnerable, such as race, sexual orientation or gender identity and disability, and to reform the broken immigration system.

To ensure the country’s role as a leading nation, the *Blueprint’s* policy recommendations include repealing the arbitrary limits on federal discretionary spending put into place by the *Budget Control Act of*

2011, expanding pediatric research funding at the National Institutes of Health and other agencies, and protecting the civil rights of children and families by working through the Department of Justice.

Looking ahead

The Academy has shared the *Blueprint* with AAP members, partners, stakeholders and the media. The transition plan also was shared with both presidential campaigns and Capitol Hill.

The Academy will continue to engage its partners in promoting the document and offer additional opportunities for organizations to provide their endorsements. Work will continue in the months ahead to ensure the messages outlined in the *Blueprint* are heard and acted upon by key policy- and decision-makers.

Resource

To read the *Blueprint*, watch the video from the panel event in Washington, D.C., or to access recommendations for individual agencies, visit <http://aap.org/blueprint>.

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