

## Protect the Needs of Immigrant Children

As Congress debates a comprehensive overhaul of our nation's immigration system, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) urges all members of Congress to put the needs of immigrant children first when making decisions that will impact these children and their families.

### **Every individual, including and especially every child, living in the United States should have health insurance coverage.**

A lack of health insurance coverage for any family member can have negative impacts on the health of the entire family, so ensuring individual coverage will protect the health of our nation's children. To improve the health outcomes of all children, the AAP supports policies that:

- Eliminate waiting period and eligibility restrictions for coverage
- Allow immigrant children to access to all public health insurance programs including Medicaid, CHIP, and programs within state health insurance exchanges
- Simplify the enrollment process

### **All children, regardless of immigration status, should have access to comprehensive, coordinated, culturally and linguistically responsive, and continuous health services provided in a quality medical home.**

As of 2009, approximately 9 percent of nonelderly people in the United States were identified as having limited English proficiency (LEP). Individuals with LEP face significant barriers to accessing health coverage and care. These barriers pose especially significant barriers for children with chronic health care needs and emotional or behavioral problems. To accommodate these needs, the AAP urges Congress to ensure that:

- Interpretation services are available and fully covered by insurance
- Forms, notices, and outreach materials are provided in multiple languages

### **The health, well-being, and safety of children should be prioritized in all immigration proceedings.**

Immigration imposes unique stresses on children and families, including separation from support systems, inadequate language skills, and depression, grief, or anxiety associated with migration and acculturation. Current apprehension methods and detention and removal policies are often traumatizing to children and may contribute to children's exposure to toxic stress. To mitigate these challenges, the AAP supports policies that:

- Prevent separation of a child from his or her family and home whenever possible
- Ensure a child will never be forced to represent himself or herself in an immigration proceeding
- Guarantee that health care facilities are a safe space for children and their families by never using them or medical records in any immigration enforcement action

One in every four children in the U.S. lives in an immigrant family. Since immigrant children represent a considerable part of our economic and social future, it is in our best interest to ensure they grow up to be physically and developmentally healthy.

**Please invest in children and ensure that all kids have access to affordable, quality health care.**

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