

Talking Points for the New Mexico Pediatric Society's *Agenda for New Mexico's Children*

The New Mexico Pediatric Society's (NMPS) *Agenda for New Mexico's Children* is a roadmap for children's health in our state. Here's a quick guide to the major points you can use when talking or writing about the *Agenda*.

Please email executivedirector@nmaap.org if you have questions or want some help in crafting your message.

- A majority of children in New Mexico do not have access to the opportunities that all kids need to reach their full potential.
- If our children are not on the path to success, neither is our state.
- We need to act *now* to ensure our children's future
- Interventions are most powerful when delivered in a child's first few years of life
- Success is intergenerational: By improving the well-being of today's children, we improve the future of our state
- Supporting children's health is a smart investment. Healthy kids are more likely to attend school, be ready to learn, and graduate from high school and college.
- The New Mexico Pediatric Society's *Agenda for New Mexico's Children* focuses on the most urgent needs of children and families and includes 20 recommendations in 10 categories:
 - *Leadership and Collaboration*: New Mexico's children need our leaders to develop a shared vision and plan for collaboration across state government to address child health priorities
 - *Access to Care*: New Mexico's children need a robust health system that provides integrated access to preventive, primary, and specialty care
 - *Health Care*: All children deserve access to needed medical care. However, New Mexico's children face deep inequities in obtaining care.
 - *Home Visiting*: High-quality home visiting programs have been shown to improve children's health through parental coaching. Currently, however, high-quality home visiting is only available to a tiny percentage of New Mexico's newborns.
 - *Education and Literacy*: Currently, New Mexico ranks last among all states for education, and 74% of fourth graders in the state are not proficient in reading. All of New Mexico's children need access to high-quality education from early childhood and through high school graduation.
 - *Childhood Obesity/Physical Activity*: New Mexico has the 12th highest rates of Type 2 diabetes in the United States.
 - Strong state policies are needed to improve access to healthful food and increase physical activity for children to prevent obesity, which leads to Type 2 diabetes

- *Substance Abuse and Opioid Abuse:* The nationwide epidemic of opioid abuse is harming New Mexico’s children, starting at birth.¹ In 2015, New Mexico’s rate of neonatal abstinence syndrome (NAS) was 9.6 cases per 1,000 births—one of the highest rates in the nation. In 2016, more than 7 out of every 100 New Mexico youth ages 12-17 had been diagnosed with a substance abuse disorder. New Mexico has had one of the highest rates of drug-induced deaths in the nation for the past two decades, which means that New Mexico’s children are losing their parents to preventable deaths.
- *Behavioral Health:* In 2015, nearly one out of three New Mexico youth reported feeling sad or hopeless, putting them at higher risk for smoking, binge drinking, and illicit drug use. Suicide is the second leading cause of death for youth 10 to 24 years of age in New Mexico. Yet families consistently report being unable to access behavioral health services for their children.
- *Child Protection:* In 2015, more than 17 out of every 1,000 children in New Mexico were documented victims of child maltreatment, about twice the national rate of 9.2 per 1,000.² Nearly one-third of those victims were younger than three years of age, and 14 children died as a result of child abuse or neglect. But because of limited capacity, underreporting, and fragmented systems, those numbers are thought to significantly underestimate the problem.
 - New Mexico’s children need access to medical evaluations and related investigations for alleged child abuse and neglect.
- *Firearm Injury and Violence:* Children in New Mexico are killed by guns at a rate almost 60 percent higher than the national average, for the sixth highest rate in the nation.
 - New Mexico’s children need common-sense firearm policies including universal background checks, prevention of firearm trafficking, and mandated safe firearm storage in homes where children are present. They also need access to appropriate mental health services, particularly to address the effects of exposure to violence.

¹ <https://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/NSDUHsaePercents2016/NSDUHsaePercents2016.pdf>

² https://www.childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/New-Mexico-Child-Maltreatment-Factsheet_2015.pdf