

2023 Legislative Agenda

The 2023 Children's Action Alliance legislative agenda works to assure the community conditions necessary to allow all Arizona families to have equitable access to high-quality education, health care, child well-being, services, and employment. We strive to live in an Arizona where all children and families thrive.



Early Childhood

A strong start in life leads to a successful future. As the cost of living continues to rise, providing all families with the resources and services they need to thrive is of the utmost importance. We believe that the state must take an active role in lifting up families as a means of supporting the most vulnerable years in a child's life.

These early experiences shape a child's lifelong learning as human brain development occurs most rapidly and dramatically in the first three years of life. For every \$1 spent on early childhood, up to \$16 are saved through decreased special education, social welfare, and crime-related costs. Investments early in life also increase high school and college graduations and spur economic development. Children's Action Alliance will continue to advocate for policies and programs that help young children gain a strong start in life and are school ready, including:

- State investment to keep child care provider reimbursement rates at the recommended federal benchmark that pays what it costs to provide care.
- Expand mental and behavioral health supports to early care and education program.
- Support for the Strong Families AZ Home Visiting System - Nurse-Family Partnership.
- Expand access to high-quality early learning settings like Head Start, child care, and preschool.



Children and Family Health

Arizona has entered a new phase of the pandemic. COVID-19 is once again ravaging our communities, and children and families are seeing frequent rates of hospitalization due to influenza and RSV. As we navigate this new reality, we must ensure that every community has access to the resources they need to be well and stay healthy. That means investing in culture-affirming care and affordable health coverage. CAA will continue to focus on maximizing our state's participation in Medicaid and CHIP, by:

- Increasing income eligibility for KidsCare, Arizona's children's health insurance program (CHIP) to better reflect the economic realities of working families.
- Provide comprehensive dental care to adults who participate in Medicaid.
- Streamlining enrollment processes and ensuring uninterrupted AHCCCS coverage for children, so parents do not have to jump through hoops to keep their kids covered. This includes reducing the administrative burden on families and eradicating other barriers, such as waiting periods for coverage and penalties.
- Extend AHCCCS eligibility to non-citizen children and pregnant people.



Child Welfare

Arizona must reimagine its child welfare system as a child well-being system—a system that prevents abuse and neglect by ensuring families have the resources they need, partners with communities to co-design solutions, prioritizes family integrity, and, for those families that do need foster care, provides high-quality engagement and services to promote healing and set children and families up for success after child welfare involvement ends :

- Establish a coordinated and collaborative statewide effort to review and reform Arizona's mandated reporting system.
- Ensure foster children placed with kin receive the same level of support as they would get in a community foster home and increase access to services for kinship families who are not formally involved with the child welfare system.
- Promote and protect the entitlement to participate in extended foster care for youth who age-out.
- Immediately end policies that leave children and families with fewer resources due to system involvement, such as the imposition of juvenile court fees and assessment and the state's collection of foster children's SSI benefits to offset the cost of their care.



Children's
Action Alliance

azchildren.org

3030 N. 3rd St.
Suite 760
Phoenix, AZ
85012

5049 E. Broadway
Blvd. Suite 158
Tucson, AZ
85711