

2025 POLICY PRIORITIES

Children's Action Alliance (CAA) envisions an Arizona where all children and families thrive. In carrying out this vision for thirty-seven years, we have utilized data, research, and relationships to advocate with policy makers across the political spectrum to promote policy and state budget decisions that work for - not against - children and families. Our 2025 Policy Agenda identifies key priorities.



Early Childhood: Increasing Access to Child Care for Families

Access to high-quality child care and early learning is essential for children and for their families. Child care creates a strong foundation for a child's future, including school readiness and healthy development. Affordable and accessible child care also allows parents to pursue job, educational, and training opportunities that increase their own economic power, as well as the state's economic potential.

However, the price and lack of access keep child care options out of the reach of hard-working families. Creative solutions, sustainable funding, and private-public partnerships are essential.

CAA's top early childhood priorities are:

- **AFFORDABILITY:** Identifying targeted state and federal child care funding to create affordable, quality options for parents, supporting provider stabilization and workforce compensation, and eliminating the waitlist for state child care financial assistance.
- **CHILD CARE WORKFORCE:** Addressing the shortage of child care workers so more children can be served by making child care workers categorically eligible and waitlist exempt for child care assistance.
- **RURAL ARIZONA:** Increasing the number of high-quality child care facilities in underserved and rural communities by investing in quality child care construction projects via capital funding, appropriations, and other innovations through public and private-public partnerships.



Child Welfare: Supporting the Well-Being of Children and Families

Too many families face a crisis due to rising costs of food and transportation, housing insecurity, and lack of support to make ends meet. When families have access to concrete supports like Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), child care, and stable housing, reports of neglect and entries into foster care decrease.

In times when a child can no longer remain safely with parents, it is critical to support grandparents and other kinship care givers so they can afford to step in. When this is not possible, it is essential that children are placed in safe and nurturing homes, not institutions where they are less likely to thrive.

This next legislative session, CAA child welfare priorities are:

- **PREVENTION:** Strengthening prevention efforts by supporting the economic well-being of families to avoid crisis, addressing high rates of racial disparities in the child welfare system, redefining neglect to ensure that poverty alone does not lead to the separation of a family, and developing a robust system of Family Resource Centers across Arizona for all children.
- **NUTURING HOMES, NOT INSTITUTIONS:** Supporting the safety of children in foster care by committing to placement with families, not in institutions, especially for young children.
- **YOUTH WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED FOSTER CARE:** Strengthening the stability of youth who transition out of foster care by funding supportive aftercare services like cash assistance and housing support.
- **GRANDPARENTS AND KINSHIP CAREGIVERS:** Increasing support for kinship caregivers so they receive the same support as all foster parents, and restoring child-only TANF for children living with kin outside of the foster care system.



Health: Keeping Children Healthy

As the cost of living continues to rise, ensuring that all families have health care is one of the best ways to support the most vulnerable years in a child's life. All children deserve a healthy start in life so they can grow and thrive in school and beyond.

Yet Arizona is among the five states with the most uninsured children in the nation, and, as a result, many children often go without routine preventive care to stay healthy. A full set of preventative health services, whether through AHCCCS, KidsCare, or Marketplace plans is critical.

CAA's top health priorities include:

- **ACCESS TO CARE:** Protecting Arizona Health Care Cost Containment (AHCCCS) and KidsCare, which provide needed health care services for Arizonans, especially children, people with disabilities, and seniors. These programs are also key economic drivers and job creators in Arizona, especially in rural Arizona. Reductions in AHCCCS coverage will cause a significant cost shift to local employers and small businesses.
- **MARKETPLACE OPTIONS:** Promoting comprehensive coverage through Marketplace plans in Arizona.
- **ORAL HEALTH:** Supporting overall health through expanding adult dental coverage to include preventative services. This is especially important for pregnant woman since oral health disease is associated with pre-term and low-birth-weight births.