



News Articles, Voters' Guide, Advocacy

AAP president-elect candidates share their backgrounds, discuss how they would address child health concerns

Editor's note: Candidate biographies, position statements and AAP election rules are available on MyAAP, www.aap.org/election (login required).

Q: The mission of the AAP is to promote the physical, mental, and social health and well-being for all infants, children, adolescents and young adults. Identify one of these child health concerns and describe how you would address this concern as president.



Lee Savio Beers, M.D., FAAP

Washington, D.C.

It comes as no surprise to pediatricians that mental health concerns in children and adolescents are exceedingly common and can dramatically impact health and well-being. Despite our individual efforts and regardless of our practice type or specialty, we regularly face challenges meeting the behavioral health needs of our patients. These challenges are exacerbated by unacceptable racial, geographic and economic inequities. Every week, I see youths with unmet mental health needs, which I fight to address, as well as those for whom quality care was life changing - encouraging me to keep fighting.

We have made much progress, yet there is still a great deal more to do. As president, I would leverage the innovative and effective work already happening across states, align with the AAP Five-Year Strategic Plan and take a multilayered approach focusing on:

- **Supporting pediatricians in their offices** through education, improved linkages to specialty care and assistance with screening implementation, using strategies such as telemedicine and resources such as Pediatric Care Online.
- **Advocating for adequate payment and workforce capacity** to allow an expansion of community-based prevention and treatment services, including integrated care in settings such as schools and the medical home, reaching children where they live, learn and play.
- **Engaging families, communities, mental health providers and pediatricians** to co-design and implement systems and strategies that will be meaningful, effective and sustainable.

By taking a comprehensive systems-based approach, the AAP can be leaders in promoting and transforming behavioral health, so all children have the opportunity to be healthy and flourish.



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Pamela K. Shaw, M.D., FAAP

Kansas City, Kan.

It has been said that science is a description not destiny. The AAP is an organization that uses science to inform the care of children. But the science has evolved. In order to have a healthy future, children need to have good physical and mental health.

Pediatricians are still interested in preventing disease, but the environment that children live in now can decide their destiny. The science has been clear about the downstream effect of adverse childhood events. However, we know with early intervention that children can build resilience, and we can prevent the adult consequences of toxic stress.

We cannot expect to change all of the factors in a child's life, but we can screen, treat and provide resources to help the children and families that we see. So many of the children that I see in practice have mental health issues. We must provide the behavioral health services for these children because, as we all know, other providers are not always available.

As president of the AAP, I will work to provide education, coordination and resources so that pediatricians can screen and treat these issues and ultimately prevent the effects of toxic stress. In order to provide this care, I will advocate for payment for prevention and the treatment of toxic stress. Adequate payment for "wellness" as well as "illness" has to be provided for children to succeed. Science can be a description, but we as pediatricians can change the destiny of the children in our care.

Biographies

Dr. Shaw

Dr. Shaw is a professor of pediatrics at the University of Kansas (KU) Medical Center. For the university, she is assistant dean for clinical sciences and associate vice chancellor for student services. She has served as AAP Kansas Chapter president and recently completed six years as the chair and board member for District VI.

She has been involved in training for the chapter to help private practice physicians offer evidence-based and quality care to children, including developmental and mental health screening; detection and treatment of obesity; oral health services; and immunizations. Part of her new job is providing services to students from the medical school, nursing school and health professions.

She received her undergraduate degree in human biology from KU. She attended medical school and did her pediatric residency at KU. After experiencing private practice, Dr. Shaw returned to KU in 1990 where she has been involved in teaching and practice of general pediatrics since then.



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She is married and has three sons and a daughter-in-law. She loves to read, travel and watch sporting events, especially KU basketball.

Dr. Beers

Dr. Beers is a community pediatrician, associate professor of pediatrics and medical director for municipal and regional affairs at Children's National in Washington, D.C. She earned her medical degree from Emory University and completed her pediatric residency at Naval Medical Center Portsmouth. Previously, she was a pediatrician at Naval Hospital Guantanamo Bay and National Naval Medical Center.

Dr. Beers has held numerous leadership positions in the Academy. She is associate editor-mental health for Pediatric Care Online, the District of Columbia Chapter's early childhood chapter champion and a member of the Think Babies Campaign Steering Committee. Previous AAP leadership roles include District I coordinator for the Section on Residents, vice president of the Uniformed Services East Chapter, Nominations Committee chair for the Section on Young Physicians, chair of the Committee on Residency Scholarships, president of the D.C. Chapter, District III Chapter Forum Management Committee representative and member of the CEO Search Committee.

She oversees the D.C. Collaborative, a public-private coalition that elevates the standards of mental health care for all children, and is co-director of the Early Childhood Innovation Network. She was director of the Generations Program for adolescent headed families and founding director of D.C. Mental Health Access in Pediatrics. She serves on D.C.'s State Early Childhood Development Coordinating Council and Council for School Mental Health. She received the Academic Pediatric Association's 2019 Public Policy and Advocacy Award. In addition, she has extensive media and public speaking experience.

Dr. Beers lives in Washington, D.C., with her husband Nathaniel and two children.