



THE OFFICIAL NEWSMAGAZINE OF THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRICS

# AAP News

## **AAP champions universal health coverage for all children in all settings**

by Trisha Koriath, Staff Writer

When the United Nations (U.N.) convenes to vote on the Political Declaration on Universal Health Coverage (UHC) in New York on Sept. 23, the AAP will have made every effort to ensure that coverage includes children, adolescents and young people.

Is the U.N. trying to insure the whole world? Not exactly.

If signed, the UHC declaration will send a message that the 194 U.N. member states stand by their commitment to achieve stronger health systems by 2030.

The declaration includes input from member states as well as "non-state actors" - groups of organizations such as the AAP - that advocate for the U.N. to support stronger global health policies.

It is important for the AAP to provide input about child and adolescent needs within UHC. Every child's future depends on it.

"All children deserve access to quality primary health care," said Janna Patterson, M.D., M.P.H., FAAP, senior vice president, AAP Global Child Health and Life Support. "The AAP has been a staunch advocate for every child's right to health care for a long time. UHC provides a way to ensure this vision becomes a reality for all children, no matter where you live."

The AAP is contributing to the UHC dialogue by providing input on seminal documents that will be read by ministers of health and through participation in a stakeholder meeting on UHC at the U.N. and the World Health Assembly (WHA) in Geneva, Switzerland, in May. (See <https://tinyurl.com/WHA72AAP>)

"In partnership with others, we will advocate for children to remain a top priority in UHC and the life-course approach to health care and that all children are included," said Dr. Patterson. "Some people may think that UHC is like a global Affordable Care Act, which it is not. It is broader than that. It emphasizes access to quality primary care services but does not dictate the system for achieving this. It's great to see that UHC is a top priority for the World Health Organization with an emphasis on primary health care."

Some pediatric needs seem obvious, such as maternal and newborn care, immunizations and nutrition. The AAP also has elevated issues that might otherwise slip through the cracks, like the prevention and management of noncommunicable diseases in children.

At the WHA, the AAP offered input to member states on six issues as members of the U.S.-based Global Health Council. In addition to UHC, the pediatric issues included polio transition; health, environment and climate change; access to medicines and vaccines; promoting health of migrants and refugees; and strengthening tobacco control.

The AAP takes every opportunity to be involved in these debates and ensure that the needs of children and youths are on the global agenda, said Mark Del Monte, J.D., AAP CEO/executive vice president (interim).

"The AAP creates an important link between children and families, pediatricians and government," Del Monte said. "Our mission calls on us to advocate for children wherever they are and in whatever communities they live and grow."

### **FAQs about universal health coverage**



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## *What are the goals of achieving universal health coverage (UHC)?*

With UHC, all individuals and communities would receive needed health services (promotive, preventive, curative, rehabilitative and palliative) without financial hardship, leading to advancements in equity, development priorities, and social inclusion and cohesion.

## *How is UHC measured?*

A framework developed by the World Bank and World Health Organization measures the progress of a country and the world by evaluating the proportion of the population that can access essential quality health services and the proportion of the population that spends a large amount of household income on health.

## *What are some misconceptions about UHC?*

UHC is not free coverage for all possible health interventions, regardless of cost. This is not sustainable for countries. UHC addresses issues beyond health financing, including the entire health system, its workforce, quality assurance and technologies. It ensures a progressive expansion of coverage of health services and financial protection as more resources become available. UHC addresses individual treatment and population-based services (e.g., awareness campaigns, water fluoridation).

## **Is UHC the same as single-payer health care?**

No. There is no one-size-fits-all to achieving UHC. UHC ensures everybody has access to health care but does not define who pays for and provides those services.

## **Resources**

- [Online course](#)
- [Fact sheet](#)
- [Additional AAP Abroad columns](#)