2019 Capitol Hill Day Issues

The National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners (NAPNAP) is the nation’s only professional association for pediatric nurse practitioners (PNPs), family nurse practitioners (FNPs) and their fellow pediatric-focused advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs) who are dedicated to improving the quality of health care for infants, children, adolescents and young adults. Representing more than 9,000 practitioners, NAPNAP has advocated for children’s health since 1973.

The guiding principles of NAPNAP’s 2019 health policy agenda are:

- All children and their families have the right to a safe environment absent of discrimination and in recognition of their individuality and resilience.
- Children should have access to comprehensive, continuous, coordinated, compassionate, culturally sensitive and family-centered health care, including behavioral health services in order to ensure healthy lifestyles.
- We strive to remove barriers that impede access to the care provided by pediatric advanced practice nurses in all practice settings.
- Commitment to national and grassroots advocacy by NAPNAP members is essential and should be supported by providing learning opportunities for members to support their development as advocates.

Take Action to Address the Youth Nicotine Addiction

NAPNAP believes Congress must enact laws that establish a comprehensive plan to prevent youth nicotine addiction that includes prohibiting the use and advertising of flavors in tobacco and e-cigarette products, raising the legal age to purchase tobacco and nicotine products to 21, limiting or prohibiting internet sales of tobacco and nicotine products to youth, requiring proven age verification for all over-the-counter and online sales of these products – with significant penalties for retailers who sell to minors and ensuring that any policy to reduce nicotine levels in cigarettes requires equivalent reductions in the nicotine content of e-cigarettes.

- NAPNAP urges members of Congress to act this year to pass comprehensive, strong bipartisan legislation that will protect public health and reverse the increase in youth nicotine addiction.

Improve Public Awareness of and Access to Vaccines and Immunization

As the measles outbreak earlier this year demonstrated, vaccine hesitancy and avoidance of immunization is threatening public health by producing an environment where vaccine-preventable diseases can spread quickly.

- NAPNAP strongly support the “VACCINES Act” and urges members of Congress to cosponsor H.R. 2862 and to encourage their leaders to pass this legislation this year, either separately or as part of a larger package of health care policies.

Protect Immigrant Children in Federal Custody

NAPNAP members are concerned about the long-term impact of detention and separation from family members on immigrant children in government custody and alarmed by reports of substandard conditions in detention facilities: no running water, no soap, no beds, inedible food, without prescribed medication.

- NAPNAP urges Congress to act this year to pass legislation ensuring that immigrant children in federal custody get the health care screenings and treatments they need, including the “Humanitarian Standards for Individuals in Customs and Border Protection Custody Act” (H.R. 3239/S. 2135).

Support Pediatric Advanced Practice Nurse Education

PNPs, FNPs and other APRNs who care for children are an essential part of the nation’s health care delivery system, yet tens of thousands of nursing positions are unfilled and many schools of nursing face shortages of qualified faculty to provide advanced nursing education to future generations of pediatric APRNs.

- NAPNAP urges Congress to keep its commitment to meeting the nation’s health workforce needs by supporting the highest possible funding for Title VIII nursing workforce programs for fiscal year 2020.
- NAPNAP also urges members of Congress to cosponsor the “Title VIII Nursing Workforce Reauthorization Act of 2019” (H.R. 728/S. 1399) and to pass this legislation this year.
Take Action to Address Youth Nicotine Addiction

Pass Comprehensive Legislation to End the Youth Tobacco Epidemic

The linkage of e-cigarettes and vaping to a national outbreak of respiratory illness and deaths has focused public attention on the need for federal policy makers to take immediate action to protect public health. As of Oct. 15, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention had confirmed more than 30 deaths among almost 1,500 lung injuries associated with the use of e-cigarettes, with cases reported from all but one state. The 2019 National Youth Tobacco Survey found that vaping has increased by 135 percent since 2017. The nation faces a significant public health emergency, with three to four million youth – and more every day – exposed to high nicotine content pod-based e-cigarettes, at high risk for nicotine dependence, and a rapidly growing number of youths being identified with severe nicotine dependency and addiction.

Pediatric nurse practitioners (PNPs), family nurse practitioners (FNPs) and other advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs) who care for children experience the devastating impact of nicotine addiction and substance use in their clinical practice every day, and they believe the federal government must fulfill its responsibility to protect our children from addiction. The National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners (NAPNAP) has been calling for action since 2014, and it is pleased to see the Trump administration’s proposal to remove flavored e-cigarettes from the market pending long-overdue Food and Drug Administration (FDA) review. NAPNAP continues to encourage the FDA to exercise its existing authority to provide oversight over these products and reduce the harm they cause consistent with the 2009 Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act.

However, NAPNAP believes Congress must enact laws that establish a comprehensive plan to prevent youth nicotine addiction that includes prohibiting the use and advertising of flavors in tobacco and e-cigarette products, raising the legal age to purchase tobacco and nicotine products to 21, limiting or prohibiting internet sales of tobacco and nicotine products to youth, requiring proven age verification for all over-the-counter and online sales of these products – with significant penalties for retailers who sell to minors, and ensuring that any policy to reduce nicotine levels in cigarettes requires equivalent reductions in the nicotine content of e-cigarettes.

NAPNAP supports many of the bills introduced in the 116th Congress to address this epidemic, including the “Reversing the Youth Tobacco Epidemic Act” (H.R. 2339), which addresses several of these policies including raising the legal age to purchase tobacco products, prohibiting internet sales of tobacco goods, outlawing flavored tobacco products, and barring advertising of tobacco products aimed at young people. NAPNAP also supports the following bills:

- The “Stopping Appealing Flavors in E-Cigarettes for Kids (SAFE Kids) Act” (S. 655/H.R. 1498)
- The “Tobacco to 21 Act” (S. 1258/H.R. 2411)
- The “Tobacco-Free Youth Act” (S. 1541)
- The “Stopping Consumption of Tobacco by Teens (SCOTT) Act of 2019” (H.R. 2084)

The National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners (NAPNAP) urges members of Congress to act this year to pass comprehensive, strong bipartisan legislation that will protect public health and reverse the increase in youth nicotine addiction.

For more information, please contact Dave Mason at healthpolicy@napnap.org.
Improve Public Awareness of and Access to Vaccines and Immunization

Cosponsor and Pass the “VACCINES Act of 2019”

As providers of primary and specialized care to our nation’s children, the more than 9,000 members of the National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners (NAPNAP) are acutely aware of the importance of children and adults being fully immunized against the spread of preventable infectious diseases. Pediatric nurse practitioners (PNPs), family nurse practitioners (FNPs) and other advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs) who care for children believe that vaccines are the best defense we have against communicable diseases and that they play a vital role in protecting the health of our communities.

Thanks to the development of safe and effective vaccines, immunization has been one of the most successful and safest public health measures available to populations worldwide, with an unparalleled record of disease reduction and prevention. The National Association of County & City Health Officials reported that vaccines will prevent more than 322 million illnesses, 21 million hospitalizations and 732,000 deaths among children born between 1994-2013, saving the nation approximately $295 billion in direct costs and $1.38 trillion in total societal costs. The evidence-based benefits of vaccines are real and are critical to bolstering confidence in the safety of vaccination as a widely used, effective and appropriate measure to protect the residents and visitors of our nation.

Yet, despite the success and strong safety record of vaccines, vaccine hesitancy and avoidance of immunization has been increasing. As the measles outbreak earlier this year demonstrated, this trend threatens local public health by producing an environment where vaccine-preventable diseases such as measles, mumps and pertussis (whooping cough) can spread quickly from person-to-person simply because vaccination rates are low. Lower vaccination rates can also pose a greater risk for children who are immune-compromised or very young and cannot be vaccinated themselves. To prevent such disease outbreaks, we must continue to educate and inform the public on the positive effect vaccines have on public health.

On May 21, Reps. Kim Schrier, MD (D-WA) and Michael Burgess, MD (R-TX) introduced the “Vaccine Awareness Campaign to Champion Immunization Nationally and Enhance Safety (VACCINES) Act of 2019” (H.R. 2862). This important legislation would support research efforts to address vaccine hesitancy, improve public awareness of the importance of immunizations and increase the rate of vaccinations across all ages. It would create a national vaccination rate surveillance system at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to identify communities with low vaccination utilization or where misinformation about vaccine safety may influence health care decisions. The grants authorized by this legislation would help clinicians understand patients’ attitudes towards vaccines and adopt strategies to more effectively deal with nonadherence to recommended vaccine use. The legislation would also initiate an evidence-based public awareness campaign on the importance of immunizations that would seek to raise vaccination rates, especially in communities that have particularly low levels.

- The National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners (NAPNAP) strongly support the “VACCINES Act” and urges members of Congress to cosponsor H.R. 2862 and to encourage their leaders to pass this legislation this year, either separately or as part of a larger package of health care policies.

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Protect Immigrant Children in Federal Custody

Provide Access to Pediatric Care from Qualified Providers

Like all health care providers, pediatric nurse practitioners (PNPs), family nurse practitioners and other advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs) who care for children are deeply distressed by the plight of immigrant children detained in federal custody along the U.S.-Mexico border, often separated from their parents and families, under poor conditions in facilities that have put them at risk of contracting serious diseases, experiencing traumatic mental and emotional stress and that led to the death of at least seven children since last year.

The National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners (NAPNAP) and its members are concerned about the long-term impact of detention and separation from family members on immigrant children in government custody. They are distraught by reports documenting substandard conditions in detention facilities: no running water, no soap, no beds, inedible food. They have witnessed cases in which medications have been taken away from children who need them, outbreaks of preventable infectious diseases and appropriate vaccines haven’t been provided.

Association leaders have met with members of Congress, officials at the Department of Homeland Security and representatives of the International Commission of the Red Cross in an effort to ensure that children in federal custody receive the appropriate medical screenings and treatment conducted by a qualified pediatric health care provider, including pediatric APRNs.

NAPNAP supports the “Humanitarian Standards for Individuals in Customs and Border Protection Custody Act” (H.R. 3239/S. 2135) as an important first step to ensure that adequate minimum standards for health care, water and nutrition, hygiene, sanitation and shelter are met. This legislation would help to ensure that appropriate medical screening and care is provided to all individuals including immigrant children and pregnant women in Customs and Border Protection (CBP) custody by qualified health care professionals including nurses and nurse practitioners focused on pediatric care, with language assistance and access to emergency care, if required. The bill would assure the availability of appropriate basic medication for all age groups, including children, as well as essential water, sanitation and hygiene and adequate food and nutrition.

Ensuring that immigrant children detained in federal custody receive timely and appropriate medical care from qualified pediatric health care providers, including PNPs and FNPs, is not a partisan issue.

- The National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners (NAPNAP) urges members of Congress to act this year to pass legislation that will ensure that immigrant children in federal custody get the health care screenings and treatments they need, including the “Humanitarian Standards for Individuals in Customs and Border Protection Custody Act” (H.R. 3239/S. 2135).

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Support Pediatric Advanced Practice Nurse Education

Reauthorize and Fund Title VIII Nursing Workforce Programs

Our country continues to face an increasing demand for health care providers at a time when many professions are unable to provide educational opportunities for all the students seeking them. Pediatric nurse practitioners (PNPs), family nurse practitioners (FNPs) and other advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs) who care for children are an essential part of the nation’s health care delivery system, yet tens of thousands of nursing positions are unfilled in acute care settings, home health care, health departments, community health centers, schools, and workplaces. Many schools of nursing also face critical shortages of qualified faculty to provide advanced nursing education to future generations of pediatric APRNs.

Studies have shown that up to 80 percent of patients’ primary care needs can be managed safely and effectively by nurse practitioners. Funding advanced nursing education is a cost-effective approach to increasing the primary care provider workforce, especially in underserved areas. For more than 50 years, the Health Resources and Services Administration’s Nursing Workforce Development programs, authorized under Title VIII of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. 296 et. seq.) have helped to ensure the supply and distribution of qualified nurses to meet the nation’s health care needs – supporting nursing education at all levels, increasing the number of nurses in the workforce and providing critical aid for the institutions that educate the nurses of the future. The nurses supported through these programs go on to provide high-quality care to patients in a wide range of practice settings.

On June 19, the House of Representatives passed the “Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, Defense, State, Foreign Operations, and Energy and Water Development Appropriations Act, 2020” (H.R. 2740) that included a $10 million increase for the statutory Title VIII programs, up to $259.47 million, and additional $20 million for a nurse practitioner fellowship initiative. The Senate Appropriations Committee released a draft of its “Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies Appropriation Bill, 2020” on Sept. 18 that would provide a $4 million increase for the statutory Title VIII programs, up to $253.47 million.

- The National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners (NAPNAP) urges Congress to keep its commitment to meeting the nation’s health workforce needs by supporting the highest possible funding for Title VIII nursing workforce programs for fiscal year 2020.

Separately, legislation has been introduced in both the House and the Senate to reauthorize funding for the Title VIII programs through fiscal year 2024. The “Title VIII Nursing Workforce Reauthorization Act of 2019” (H.R. 728/S. 1399) has strong bipartisan support in both chambers of Congress and the House Energy and Commerce Committee approved H.R. 728 by voice vote on July 17.

- NAPNAP urges members of Congress to cosponsor the “Title VIII Nursing Workforce Reauthorization Act of 2019” and encourage their leaders to pass this legislation this year to ensure continued federal support for these critical programs.

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