Two Years Later: What the Affordable Care Act Means for Children
Op-ed Guidelines

Write to Your Local Newspapers in Support of Health Reform for Children

The Affordable Care Act became law on March 23, 2010. Two years later, many of the law’s major child health provisions have already taken effect, and the AAP continues to work with the federal government to strengthen and improve the law as it takes effect. As we commemorate the law’s two year anniversary in advance of the Supreme Court’s consideration of its constitutionality later this month, it is valuable for pediatricians to promote what’s good and amplify what can still be improved in the health reform law for children. One way to do this is through submitting opinion editorials (op-eds) to local media outlets to commemorate the Affordable Care Act’s two-year anniversary.

Writing Your Op-ed

Op-eds are an effective medium to communicate opinions on timely issues. They are typically 500-600 words in length, though it is always important to check with the publication itself for specific length requirements (most publications have these guidelines on their websites). Read op-eds recently published by AAP leadership on a resource page of FederalAdvocacy.aap.org.

Below is suggested language to include in a draft op-ed to submit to your local newspaper. The AAP strongly recommends that you add in personal stories from your pediatric practice—it is important to make your submission unique, so the language below should be considered simply as a starting point. If you are comfortable using the message below in your op-ed, please mention your Academy title and membership affiliation in your signature.

Submitting Your Op-ed

The Media Outreach Center on FederalAdvocacy.aap.org allows you to search for and contact your local newspapers directly by zip code. You can either contact the publication with the information provided, or go to the website of your local paper for specific op-ed length requirements and guidelines.

Please note that many op-eds are considered “exclusive;” you can only submit your piece to one paper at a time. Should one publication decline to publish your piece, you can resubmit to another, but you should avoid sending your op-ed to several papers at once. Most publications will tell you within 1-2 days if they plan to publish your op-ed.

Since the Affordable Care Act’s anniversary takes place on March 23, it is best to submit it to a newspaper by March 16 if possible.

Please contact Jamie Poslosky in the AAP Department of Federal Affairs at jposlosky@aap.org for assistance in writing and submitting your op-ed
Op-ed Content Guidelines

**Feel free to include personal stories, state-specific data, and any other content**

- On March 23, the Affordable Care Act turns two. Just a few days later, the Supreme Court is hearing challenges to the law and will soon decide whether or not it’s constitutional.
- As a pediatrician in [insert state], I can tell you first-hand how the last two years have changed for [insert state] children. We have [insert state number] of kids enrolled in Medicaid, and the Affordable Care Act improves the program, allowing even more families to enroll starting in 2014.
- (As appropriate/relevant, please consider inserting a specific story of a patient who has benefited from the law’s pediatric provisions, or simply reference one or two of the child health protections within the law and speak generally to its impact in your state/practice. Below are some of the child health reforms you may wish to draw from):
  - Young adults can now get coverage on their parents’ plans until they turn 26.
  - Preventive services—including all well-child visits—like physical exams, immunizations, hearing and vision screenings, and developmental and behavioral screenings—are currently provided to families with new health insurance plans without cost-sharing. Over time, more and more insurance plans will provide this benefit.
  - Parents can designate a pediatrician as their child’s primary care provider.
  - Children with pre-existing conditions can no longer be denied health care coverage by insurance companies.

- That’s not to say that the law is perfect—there have already been improvements made since it was passed two years ago, and we have the chance to make even more through the regulatory process.
- But a majority of the law’s reforms don’t take effect until 2014. Repealing, defunding, or overturning the law now would hurt children and undo the progress we’ve made as a nation in transforming our health care system from one focused on treating patients who are sick to one invested in prevention from the moment a baby is born.
- As we commemorate the Affordable Care Act’s two-year anniversary this month, we look toward an uncertain future of where the law stands and what that will mean for children. It is my hope as a pediatrician that we can protect the gains we’ve already made for [insert state]’s children and strengthen the Affordable Care Act as it takes shape.
- (Here, you can link back to the personal perspective/story you provided earlier in the piece to conclude the op-ed).

Data to use when personalizing your op-ed:

- Op-eds recently published by AAP leadership on health reform and other timely topics on FederalAdvocacy.aap.org
- State-specific Medicaid fact sheets
- Health reform resources from the Georgetown Center for Children and Families, Young Invincibles, and the Commonwealth Fund
- March 2012 AAP News article detailing the upcoming Supreme Court consideration of the Affordable Care Act; March 2011 AAP News article reviewing the Affordable Care Act’s benefits for children and pediatricians, and a September 2010 AAP News article outlining more details on each child health provision that took effect Sept. 23, 2010
- Healthcare.gov, which explains what’s in the law, and kidswellcampaign.org, which details state-by-state breakdowns of health reform implementation for children
- Animated video from the Kaiser Family Foundation on the Affordable Care Act
- Visit FederalAdvocacy.aap.org for additional resources, including fact sheets, a PowerPoint slides