2023 Policy Agenda
January 2023

**Top Priorities**

**Recruit, Retain and Support Healthcare Workforce Adequacy:** NCPeds strongly supports medical teams and access by children to a full range of health care services. NCPeds supports development of sustained and strategic actions at every point of the health workforce pathway. Examples of strategies include supporting the Center for the Workforce on Health, recruiting candidates from rural areas and diverse populations, using Graduate Medical Education Funds strategically, growing preceptor opportunities, preventing burnout including due to administrative burden and promoting telehealth with strong ties to the medical home.

**Assure that Medicaid Standard Plans and Tailored Plans work for kids, including children and youth in foster care:** NCPeds supports a strong Medicaid program that works well for the more than 1 million children and their families covered by Medicaid. One key priority is the development of a strong and appropriate Specialized Plan for children and youth in/leaving foster care and their families, including the need for one single statewide Plan to minimize disruption when children are placed in different regions of the state. Until that happens, current SP and TP need to work well for children and youth in foster care.

**Expand Medicaid:** More than half a million North Carolinians are unable to see a doctor when they need one because reliable health insurance is out of reach. Insurance can help assure adults are healthier before they conceive, leading to improved birth outcomes. When low-income parents are enrolled in Medicaid, their children are 29% more likely to have a well-child visit. Health insurance can also help parents address their own health issues, including opioid addiction.

**Promote firearm safety, including safe storage:** A study published in JAMA Pediatrics in 2019 estimated that up to 32% of youth firearm deaths could be prevented through safe storage of firearms in homes with youths. In particular, NCPeds is deeply concerned about the toll COVID-19 is taking on youth mental health, including the concerning rate of suicidality.

**Increase state funding for safe sleep to $250,000:** After a substantial decline in sleep-related deaths in the 1990s, the overall death rate attributable to sleep-related infant deaths has remained stagnant since 2000, and disparities persist. In 2022, the American Academy of Pediatrics updated their recommendations. Given the updated recommendations and that parents and other caregivers may be new to the needs of caring for a baby, more funding is needed to assure adequate outreach for safe sleep environments.

**Other Areas of Support**

- Promote funding for school meals for all
- Promote policies that support the implementation of an effective Tobacco 21 Law
- Promote tobacco-use prevention and cessation, including vaping