



SOCIETY OF
PEDIATRIC NURSES

SPN Position Statement

Access to Care

All SPN Position statements are valid for two years after approval date.

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The Society of Pediatric Nurses (SPN) believes that all children deserve access to lifelong, affordable, comprehensive, health care across all care delivery settings. Health care that is designed to meet the holistic needs of children and their families must also be timely, evidence-based, and coordinated to ensure the provision of quality and equitable services.

Access to health care is defined as “the timely use of personal health services to achieve the best health outcomes” which includes access to health care coverage and timely services provided by a qualified and capable workforce (Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality [AHRQ], n.d.).

Health during childhood sets the stage for health during adulthood; healthy children are likely to become healthy adults that contribute positively to the structure, function, and sustenance of current and future communities. Children who cannot access the quality care they need may have more preventable hospitalizations, complications, and resultant emotional stress and increased costs of care (Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health, & Office of the Secretary, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, n.d.). Delays in the provision of child health services can lead to missed opportunities for early screening and detection of health problems, increased risks for outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases, and chronic disease (Nguyen et al., 2022; Trent et al., 2019).

SPN recognizes that mere access to care neither ensures quality nor eliminates health disparities that originate from discriminatory practices aimed at excluding healthcare participation upon the basis of protected characteristics. Discrimination in health care settings and legal restriction of evidence-based practices endangers lives through delays or denials of

medically necessary care. Access to quality, nondisparaging, care is essential for a child's wellbeing.

To promote access to health care for children and their families across all care delivery settings, SPN supports initiatives and legislation that address the following areas and associated action points:

Expand health care insurance coverage

- Reduce barriers to child health insurance enrollment and access to affordable, comprehensive, child health insurance coverage.

Address the nursing shortage

- Permit providers of health care services to practice to the full extent of their license, education, scope of practice, and documented competence.
- Support the expansion of nursing workforce development programs.

Address social determinants of health

- Target the improvement of structural interventions that address health care and socioeconomic disparities and social determinants of health.

Improve cultural responsiveness

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination or conduct that denies or limits a child's full and equal access to participate in or benefit from health care services or activities because of decisions based on that child's protected status(es).
- Examine and effectively address biases that impact health care delivery; public health outcomes; the health professions workplace and learning environments; and the diversity of trainees and the workforce.
- Create systems that empower children and their families to make informed decisions about health maintenance and illness and injury prevention behaviors within the context of their own attitudes, beliefs, and cultures.

REFERENCES

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