



600 13TH ST., NW, SUITE 500
WASHINGTON, DC 20005
p | 202-753-5500
f | 202-347-5147

16011 COLLEGE BLVD., SUITE 250
LENEXA, KS 66219
p | 913-262-1436
f | 913-262-1575

WWW.CHILDRENSHOSPITALS.ORG

June 6, 2022

The Honorable Xavier Becerra
Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Ave SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Becerra,

Thank you for your commitment to improving children's health and well-being and supporting the providers who care for them. We appreciate your ongoing work to address the children's mental health crisis and systemic health disparities so that all children can access the care that they need. This is important for everyone, but especially for children with medically complex conditions. We write today to ask you for timely and strong federal guidance on the Advancing Care for Exceptional Kids Act (ACE Kids) that would help advance our collective priorities on children's mental health and health equity.

The ACE Kids law creates a state option under Medicaid to implement health homes for children with medically complex conditions. These children and their families have faced barriers accessing and coordinating timely care. The ACE Kids health homes would streamline physical and behavioral health and coordinate across providers. Not surprisingly, many children with medically complex conditions also have co-occurring behavioral health conditions. Implementation of ACE Kids provides the opportunity for integration of care across physical and behavioral health. We see it as a vital part of the strategy to address the children's mental health crisis for this specific population of children.

One of the main features of the ACE Kids law is a national definition of eligible children. The purpose is to have a consistent definition applied across states that will produce improved data to identify any gaps in care, characteristics, equity challenges, appropriate payment models and quality metrics. Implementation of this national definition is critical to the success of this program for children and families by providing national data that can then drive quality improvements. This was a main goal of the ACE Kids congressional champions.

In 2020, we shared recommendations from a panel of pediatric experts on how the ACE Kids definition could be implemented consistently across states with existing, publicly available methodologies and appropriate quality measures. We have attached them to this letter for your reference. We also believe a strong national definition will support broader policy improvements as data is available that can inform federal and state policies focused on children with medically complex conditions.

Ensuring that all children can access the care that they need, no matter their background, income and physical and behavioral needs, includes a strong federal definition of eligible children. This national definition ensures the enhanced federal resources provided by ACE Kids support the children with very complex medical needs and the care they require daily.

Champions for Children's Health

We have been engaged with your team on ACE Kids implementation and look forward to federal implementation of ACE Kids that delivers on its promise for children and their families.

Very best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark Wietecha". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Mark" and last name "Wietecha" clearly distinguishable.

Mark Wietecha
Chief Executive Officer
Children's Hospital Association