2024 is slated to be one of the most consequential years in recent memory for the children of California and around the globe. From child poverty to the mental health impacts of social media, there are a host of critical issues at stake that will require our voices. As we gear up for an important year of advocacy, it is valuable to get a big picture view of the challenges that children are facing throughout the state, how things have been progressing, and what we can do to help further the cause.

One of my favorite tools to review each year towards this effort is the California Children’s Report Card from Children Now, a non-partisan research, policy development, and advocacy non-profit focused exclusively on the children of California. Each year their team navigates an arduous task of evaluating and grading essentially all of the key metrics of child health and well-being throughout the state, across healthcare, education, family-support, child-welfare, and several other cross-sector issues. In the end they create a fantastically thorough report which can be used by advocates across the state to better support children.

Some stand out findings for me:

1. Healthcare Accountability/Access was graded a D+, given significant difficulties getting many children timely access to care, even in the setting of having health insurance. Stronger contracts with managed care plans, set to take effect this year, may present an opportunity to reward plans for better outcomes with children—applying pressures for improved standards.
2. Childcare was rated a C-. This was a big priority for AAP-CA2 over the last year. There were significant improvements in 2023, including funding via the state budget to make the system somewhat more affordable and equitable. But there is still a long way to go in making concrete improvements that families can feel in their day-to-day lives when it comes to access and affordability of childcare.
3. Interestingly, Health Insurance was the only A (well, technically A-) given out across the report card. This is because California has done an excellent job of working to ensure that as many children as possible have the ability to enroll in health insurance, particularly through Medi-Cal. While this is fantastic, as point #1 illustrates, insurance means very little if there is limited access to services.

Now, in lieu of a long article detailing each finding of the report, I encourage you each to take some time to review this stellar document, identify issues that are important to your patients, see how these issues have progressed over the last year, and get some ideas for the year ahead!

2024 California Children's Report Card
References:

The Quorum is a monthly policy spotlight published by the California Chapter 2 of the American Academy of Pediatrics (San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, Ventura, Kern, Los Angeles, Riverside and San Bernardino). For any inquiries, please email Chapter 2 legislative and policy analyst, Kamaal Jones, at KamaalJones.AAP@gmail.com

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October 2023: Updates on Mental Health Policy
September 2023: Updates From Sacramento
August (Legislative recess)
July 2023: The Climate Crisis is Heating Up
June 2023: Bill Updates
May 2023: What the California Budget Revise Means for Kids
April 2023: Advocacy Conference and The Unwinding
March 2023: Protecting Youth from Fentanyl
February 2023: The Childcare Crisis
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