



AMERICAN
PSYCHOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION
PRACTICE ORGANIZATION

May 19, 2015

The Honorable Chuck Grassley
135 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Michael Bennet
458 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Joe Barton
2107 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kathy Castor
205 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Sens. Grassley and Bennet and Reps. Barton and Castor:

On behalf of the American Psychological Association Practice Organization (“APAPO”), I would like to express our support for S. 298/H.R. 546, the Advancing Care for Exceptional Kids Act of 2015 (the “ACE Kids Act”). We thank you for your leadership in introducing this bipartisan legislation to improve care for children with medically-complex conditions enrolled in Medicaid.

The APAPO is dedicated to advancing the practice of psychology and promotes the interests of psychologists who practice in all settings. The APAPO is a companion organization to the American Psychological Association (“APA”), the largest scientific and professional organization representing psychology in the United States, with over 122,500 researchers, educators, clinicians, consultants, and students as its members.

Children with medical complexity have multiple illnesses and disabilities, often see six or more specialists and a dozen or more physicians, and require care that takes them across state lines. Under the current Medicaid system, parents of such children struggle to coordinate the complex, multi-state care their kids need. Only federal legislation can fix the fragmented system of care for this unique population of children.

The ACE Kids Act, which is voluntary for states, families, children’s hospitals, and other providers, would create an organized system of health care delivery and support services for these children in order to ensure access to out-of-state care, reduce the burden on families, and deliver savings to Medicaid through increased efficiencies.

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Executive Director

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Nationally designated children's hospital networks created under this legislation would coordinate care and employ national quality standards, both of which are essential to saving money and improving quality of care. These networks would encompass the full range of children's health care providers, including primary care physicians, pediatric psychologists, and acute and post-acute care providers. Children's hospitals would anchor the networks and would focus on outpatient care in order to reduce hospitalizations and emergency room visits and to ensure that children get the care they need in the most appropriate settings closest to home.

Importantly, the ACE Kids Act would allow for greater integration of psychological care with the medical care received by children with medically-complex conditions. Emotional and behavioral health affect physical health, and optimal treatment effectiveness and efficiency can only be achieved if psychological care is tightly woven into the service delivery system.

Psychologists are the preeminent providers of emotional and behavioral health services in the pediatric context, with expertise in the psychosocial, developmental, and contextual factors contributing to the origin and outcome of pediatric medical conditions; the assessment and treatment of emotional and behavioral aspects of illness, injury, and developmental disorders; the prevention of illness and injury; and the promotion of health and health-related behaviors.

Providing the best possible care for children with medical complexity enrolled in Medicaid is a national challenge that needs a national solution. We are happy to join the Children's Hospital Association and the nation's leading children's hospitals in support of the ACE Kids Act, and we applaud you for introducing legislation that provides for the integration of mental and behavioral health care services into an improved delivery system for children with medically-complex conditions.

We thank you again for your leadership on this important initiative and look forward to working with you to advance this legislation in Congress. Please contact Doug Walter, J.D., Associate Executive Director, Government Relations at dwalter@apa.org or (202) 336-5889 should you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Katherine C. Nordal Ph.D." with a stylized flourish at the end.

Katherine C. Nordal, Ph.D.
Executive Director for Professional Practice
American Psychological Association Practice Organization