

Our Policy Priorities at a Glance



The Maine Children's Alliance **works to ensure that Maine's children are safe, healthy, and able to thrive by strengthening the policies and systems** families depend on. Because **children's well-being is influenced by many connected factors**, we focus our work in four core areas:

- 🌸 Early Care & Education
- 🌸 Health & Healthcare
- 🌸 Child Safety & Well-Being
- 🌸 Family Economic Security

Early Care & Education

Early care and education is essential public infrastructure. From birth through age eight, children's brains, health, and learning foundations are built. When early learning systems are unstable or inaccessible, the ripple effects are felt by families, employers, and schools.

Our Priorities:

- 🌸 Stable, **long-term investment in Maine's early childhood system** so families and providers can plan and thrive.
- 🌸 A **coordinated early childhood system** that reduces fragmentation and simplifies access for families.
- 🌸 Broad **access to high-quality early learning**, including infant and toddler care, universal public pre-K, and timely services for children with disabilities.
- 🌸 **Whole-family approaches**, including Head Start, that support parents and children together.
- 🌸 A **strong early childhood workforce** with fair wages, benefits, and clear career pathways.

Child Safety & Well-Being

Safe, supported families are the foundation of child well-being. Effective child safety systems respond early, focus on real risk, and help families meet children's needs before crises occur.

Our Priorities:

- 🌸 Clear, **consistent child safety standards** that guide appropriate responses and timely support.
- 🌸 Expanded **access to mental health and substance use services** for children, youth, and caregivers.
- 🌸 Policies that **decouple poverty from child welfare** involvement.
- 🌸 Strong **community-based prevention and family supports** that reduce the need for costly downstream interventions.
- 🌸 A **well-supported child protection workforce** with the tools and training needed for effective, fair interventions.



MCA Policy Priorities, continued

Health & Health Care

Children need timely, comprehensive care to thrive. Too many Maine families face barriers to preventive, behavioral, oral, and specialty health care, especially in rural communities and for children with complex needs.

Our Priorities:

- ✿ **Protecting children's health coverage** amid federal funding changes.
- ✿ **Improving access to existing Medicaid services** by reducing administrative and awareness barriers.
- ✿ **Strengthening pediatric preventive care**, including Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment (EPSDT).
- ✿ **Integrating primary, behavioral, and oral health care** for early intervention and prevention.
- ✿ **Improving pregnancy and postpartum care** and reducing disparities in outcomes.
- ✿ **Expanding evidence-based mental health and substance use prevention** and treatment for youth.

Family Economic Security

Economic security is one of the strongest predictors of child well-being. Rising costs for housing, food, child care, and transportation make stability increasingly out of reach for many Maine families.

Our Priorities:

- ✿ **Reducing child poverty** through coordinated, statewide action.
- ✿ **Protecting and strengthening programs that help families stay stable** during hardship.
- ✿ **Promoting economic mobility** through education, job training, and family-supporting wages.
- ✿ **Addressing housing insecurity** through both immediate supports and long-term supply solutions.
- ✿ **Removing structural barriers** to child care, transportation, health care, and nutrition.
- ✿ **Supporting fair, adequate revenue** to sustain the systems children and families rely on.

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