

American Academy of Pediatrics



Georgia Chapter

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WHEREAS: Without action taken to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, global warming will near 5°C by the end of this century and “profoundly affect” the life of every child born today.¹⁻³

WHEREAS: Dozens of health organizations, including the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), agree that climate change is a public health emergency that is already harming millions of Americans; and the National AAP recognizes the valuable role of pediatricians in the movement to address climate change.^{4,5}

WHEREAS: Children are especially vulnerable to the health impacts of climate change, and these impacts on children at vulnerable stages of growth can be lifelong, blunting the child’s developmental potential.^{3,5}

WHEREAS: Georgia is among the states predicted to be most impacted by climate change and is already experiencing climate-related shocks and stressors that affect child health:⁶

- More extreme heat increases the risk of child heat stroke, reduces opportunities for safe play, increases the likelihood that a child will be born prematurely, and worsens air quality by increasing ozone that contributes to the development of childhood asthma and illness from asthma attacks.
- More frequent wildfires threaten communities and elevate fine particulate matter concentrations, further worsening air quality and exacerbating child respiratory illness.
- Extremes of drought and flooding negatively impact Georgia’s economy, agricultural production and food security, and changes in the hydrologic cycle contribute to infectious disease outbreaks.
- Rising sea levels and increasingly powerful hurricanes and storm surge threaten our barrier islands and coastal infrastructure, disrupt education and childhood routines, and displace families, contributing to child mental health concerns including anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and behavioral problems.
- Climate-driven disasters pose a risk to Georgia’s healthcare institutions and threaten to overwhelm and undermine the ability of pediatricians to care for our patients.

WHEREAS: Many of the opportunities to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to climate change also have benefits for child health, including by reducing air pollution.^{3,4}

RESOLVED: The Georgia Chapter, AAP, recognizes that climate change threatens the health and wellbeing of Georgia’s children. Therefore, we:

- 1) Support efforts to educate our patients and communities regarding the adverse health effects of climate change and encourage urgent climate mitigation and adaptation efforts in order to protect child health.
- 2) Join the national AAP in endorsing the Priority Actions detailed in “Climate, Health, and Equity: A policy action agenda.”⁴
- 3) Encourage our healthcare institutions to prepare for climate impacts in order to avoid disruptions in patient care and to review and reduce their own greenhouse gas emissions.

References:

- ¹ IPCC. Climate Change 2014: Synthesis Report. Contribution of Working Groups I, II, and III to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Geneva, Switzerland: IPCC; 2014:151.
- ² IPCC, 2018: Summary for Policymakers. In: Global Warming of 1.5°C. An IPCC Special Report on the impacts of global warming of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels and related global greenhouse gas emission pathways, in the context of strengthening the global response to the threat of climate change, sustainable development, and efforts to eradicate poverty [Masson-Delmotte, V., P. Zhai, H.-O. Pörtner, et al (eds.)]. World Meteorological Organization, Geneva, Switzerland, 32 pp.
- ³ Lancet Countdown, 2019: 2019 Lancet Countdown on Health and Climate Change Policy Brief for the United States of America. Salas RN, Knappenberger P, Hess JJ. Lancet Countdown U.S. Policy Brief, London, United Kingdom, 11 pp.
- ⁴ U.S. Call to Action on Climate, Health, and Equity: A Policy Action Agenda. 2019. Available at: <https://climatehealthaction.org/cta/climate-health-equity-policy/>.
- ⁵ Ahdoot S, Pacheco SE; Council on Environmental Health. Global climate change and children’s health. *Pediatrics*. 2015;136(5):992-997.
- ⁶ Carter L, Terando A, Dow K, et al. “Southeast.” In: Reidmiller DR, Avery CW, Easterling D, et al., eds. *Impacts, Risks, and Adaptation in the United States: Fourth National Climate Assessment, Volume II*. Washington, DC, USA: U.S. Global Change Research Program; 2018. Available at: <https://nca2018.globalchange.gov/>