AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRICS TO LEAD NATIONAL CENTER ON EARLY CHILDHOOD HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Five-year, $33.4 million grant will establish a center at AAP to offer tools, resources and education on child health and wellness for early childhood education programs nationwide

For Release: October 5, 2015

CHICAGO – Children who have safe, healthy and nurturing environments in early childhood are better prepared for academic success in school, and a new five-year, $33.4 million grant awarded to the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) will help create a comprehensive program to address these needs in early childhood education settings nationwide.

The AAP will lead the National Center on Early Childhood Health and Wellness. The Center is jointly managed by the Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start and Office of Child Care in partnership with the Health Resource Services Administration/Maternal and Child Health Bureau/Division of Home Visiting and Early Childhood Systems. The cooperative agreement was announced today.

“The Center will support early childhood education programs in providing safe, healthy, nurturing environments for the children and families they serve, and this offers a tremendous opportunity to build healthy habits and to transform our nation’s health,” said AAP President Sandra G. Hassink, MD, FAAP. “Pediatricians are uniquely positioned to help families access high-quality early childhood education programs in their communities, which can be critical to a child’s healthy development.”

“As a pediatrician, I know that when children have access to Head Start and other high-quality early education, they are healthier and do better in school,” said AAP Executive Director Karen Remley, MD, MBA, MPH, FAAP. “When we improve the health and trajectory of our youngest children, we improve the health of entire communities, which is critical for the future success of our nation.”

The Center advances best practices for linking health and early childhood education systems. The Center’s work will include, but is not limited to, providing support on topics such as medical and dental home access; health promotion and disease prevention; emergency preparedness and environmental safety; trauma and toxic stress; developmental, behavioral, vision and hearing screening; and nutrition.

The AAP will be joined by several partners, including Education Development Center, Inc; Georgetown University National Maternal and Child Oral Health Resource Center; University of California-Los Angeles, Health Care Institute, Anderson School of Management; and Georgetown University Center for Child and Human Development. The Center will expand its expertise by collaborating with the University of Colorado-Denver, National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care and Early Education; Child Care Aware® of America; Nemours; and Zero to Three.

Each partner and collaborator brings an area of expertise related to early childhood that will enhance the value of the center to early childhood education programs and their pediatrician partners. Collectively, the groups represent decades of experience in providing training and technical assistance in the realm of early childhood education.

The Center will offer high-quality educational programs on health and safety, comprehensive tools and resources for early childhood staff, and ongoing technical assistance to early childhood programs. Training opportunities will be offered both to early childhood education programs and to pediatricians, who will be encouraged to collaborate with early childhood programs in their communities.

In establishing the National Center on Early Childhood Health and Wellness, the AAP will draw on its years of experience in leading federally-funded cooperative agreements related to early childhood
including the Healthy Child Care America initiative and the Head Start National Center on Health. The Academy will also build upon existing AAP efforts including the Bright Futures National Center; ongoing initiatives focused on poverty, mental health and foster care; the work of pediatrician-led committees, sections and councils addressing early childhood health and wellness; and continuing medical education offerings.

“Early childhood education programs are intended to prepare a child for a successful academic experience in school,” said Dr. Hassink. “We know infants and children in early learning settings with high-quality health and safety practices have the best long-term outcomes, and the Academy is pleased to support these efforts through the National Center on Early Childhood Health and Wellness. Together, the AAP, its partners and collaborators, pediatricians, and early childhood education programs will work to promote the optimal health and well-being of children, so they are ready to learn and succeed in the future.”

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*The American Academy of Pediatrics is an organization of 64,000 primary care pediatricians, pediatric medical subspecialists and pediatric surgical specialists dedicated to the health, safety and well-being of infants, children, adolescents and young adults. For more information, visit [http://www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org) or follow @Amer Acad Peds on Twitter and Facebook.*