POLICY STATEMENT Organizational Principles to Guide and Define the Child Health Care System and/or Improve the Health of all Children

American Academy of Pediatrics

DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN™

Definition of a Pediatrician

COMMITTEE ON PEDIATRIC WORKFORCE

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) has developed the following definition of pediatrics and a pediatrician:

Pediatrics is the specialty of medical science concerned with the physical, mental, and social health of children from birth to young adulthood. Pediatric care encompasses a broad spectrum of health services ranging from preventive health care to the diagnosis and treatment of acute and chronic diseases.

Pediatrics is a discipline that deals with biological, social, and environmental influences on the developing child and with the impact of disease and dysfunction on development. Children differ from adults anatomically, physiologically, immunologically, psychologically, developmentally, and metabolically.

The pediatrician, a term that includes primary care pediatricians, pediatric medical subspecialists, and pediatric surgical specialists, understands this constantly changing functional status of his or her patients' incident to growth and development and the consequent changing standards of "normal" for age. A pediatrician is a physician who is concerned primarily with the health, welfare, and development of children and is uniquely qualified for these endeavors by virtue of interest and initial training. This training includes 4 years of medical school education, plus an additional year or years (usually at least 3) of intensive training devoted solely to all aspects of medical care for children, adolescents, and young adults. Maintenance of these competencies is achieved by experience, training, continuous education, self-assessment, and practice improvement.

A pediatrician is able to define accurately the child's health status and to serve as a consultant and make use of other specialists as consultants as needed, ideally in the context of, or in conjunction with, the physician-led medical home. Because the child's welfare is heavily dependent on the home and family, the pediatrician supports efforts to create a nurturing environment. Such support includes education about healthful living and anticipatory guidance for both patients and parents.

A pediatrician participates at the community level in preventing or solving problems in child health care and publicly advocates the causes of children.

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