AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRICS POLICY STATEMENT
CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS, AND TELEVISION

American Academy of Pediatrics Policy Statement on Digital Media Use

Amend the resolution “American Academy of Pediatrics Policy Statement Children, Adolescents, and Television” as follows:

Whereas, The negative effect of television on our children is a prime concern of the National PTA; and

Whereas, The American Academy of Pediatrics, in September of 1984, released a policy statement on the effect of television on children and adolescents; and The American Academy of Pediatrics periodically releases policy statements on families’ and children’s interactions with various forms of media, including most recently in 2016 and 2020; and

Whereas, This policy statement indicates that television programming can adversely affect learning and behavior of children and adolescents in significant social, emotional, and ethical areas; and These policy statements reflect emerging research indicating that digital media may negatively impact youth mental health during an important developmental period and may undermine physical health and academic performance for children and youth; and

Whereas, This policy statement further indicates that television is a powerful tool which can promote learning, create aspirations, and induce pro-social behavior; therefore be it These policy statements further indicate that digital media can be a driver of success, enhancing the learning experience and fostering creativity and connectedness among students, educators, families and communities; and

Whereas, Digital media is any form of media that uses electronic devices for distribution. This form of media can be created, viewed, modified, and distributed via electronic devices. Digital media includes commonly used software, video games, videos, websites, social media, online advertising, and television; and therefore be it

Resolved, That the National PTA inform local units and councils about the updated policy statements from the American Academy of Pediatrics on digital media use recommendations Children, Adolescents and Television; and be it further

Resolved, That the National PTA encourage local units and councils to contact and work jointly with their local pediatricians in an effort to promote develop the media and digital literacy, digital wellness and digital citizenship skills of children and
youth, educators and families, to help children and youth act safely, responsibly and thoughtfully online and to connect families with tools, research, and support to help navigate digital environments and be successful online; and be it further

**television awareness in their communities.**

Resolved, That the National PTA encourage local units to collaborate with schools and community partners to develop media use guidelines to promote healthier habits on efforts to ensure a safe, inclusive and positive digital experience for all children, youth and families, fostering learning and healthy lifestyles and ensuring they are equipped with the technological literacy and access to thrive in an increasingly digital world.

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**American Academy of Pediatrics Policy Statement**

**CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS, AND TELEVISION**

Next to the family, television may be the most important source of information for children and a principal factor influencing their development. Children 2 to 12 years old in the United States watch approximately 25 hours of television per week. On an annual basis, children spend more time in front of their television sets than they spend in school.

Television is a powerful tool that can promote learning, create aspirations, and induce prosocial behavior. When it deals with medical topics, television contains many messages that promote health or prevent illness. However, television advertising and programming can adversely affect learning and behavior of children and adolescents in a number of significant areas:

1. Repeated exposure to televised violence promotes a proclivity to violence.
2. Television viewing increases consumption of high caloric density snacks, and increases the prevalence of obesity.
3. Although the evidence that television may have a deleterious effect on school performance may be confounded by other factors, learning from television is passive rather than active, and detracts from time spent reading or using active learning skills.
4. Television conveys unrealistic messages regarding drugs, alcohol, and tobacco, and
Resolution: AAP Policy Statement on Children, Adolescents and Television

Adopted: by the 1985 Convention Delegates

indirectly encourages their use.

5. The portrayal of sex roles and sexuality on television is unrealistic and misleading—sexual relationships develop rapidly, the risk of pregnancy is rarely considered, adolescence is portrayed as a constant state of sexual crisis. These characteristics may contribute directly or indirectly to the risk of adolescent pregnancy and clearly alter age-dependent experiential learning with respect to sexuality. Pornography on cable-television is a particularly important concern.

6. Television promotes ethnic and racial stereotypes and does little to promote a sympathetic understanding of handicapped people.

7. Television conveys an unrealistic view of problem solving or conflict resolution.

To address these concerns, we recommend that the AAP:

1. Educate pediatricians with respect to the consequences of television viewing. Approaches should include the development of specific materials and curricula for teaching medical students, pediatric house staff, participating pediatricians, and others who deal directly with the health of children and adolescents.

2. Provide materials and an approach to counseling children, adolescents and their families regarding the effects of television and methods suitable for altering viewing habits. Although an AAP pamphlet already exists for this purpose, additional materials regarding school and sexuality would be useful. Specific recommendations for counseling should be developed.

3. Encourage legislature activity to increase quality programming and reduce advertising directed at children.

4. Establish liaisons with networks, producers, writers, and other professional organizations to improve the quality of programming and advertising, and to act as a resource for these groups.

5. Provide an ongoing review of new technologies that enable families to alter or control their children’s television viewing habits.

6. Encourage involvement by local and chapter groups to interact with network affiliates, independent television stations, and cable companies to improve local programming and advertising directed at children.

Adopted: by the 1985 Convention Delegates
Reviewed: by the 1993 and 1998 Convention Resolutions Committee

Rationale for the Amendments to the Resolution

The American Academy of Pediatrics conducted an updated study in 2016 and again in 2020 and revised their recommendations to recognize the diverse needs among various age groups, media types, content and purpose and developed revised evidence-based guidelines.