

iCAN, FCAAP and Florida Residency Programs Join Forces to Advocate for Kids



On January 23, 2018, 10 youth from iCAN KIDS FL, 21 providers from 6 Florida residency programs and Florida AAP Chapter leaders participated in Children's Week in Tallahassee, Florida. The primary impact of the program is to obtain engagement of new pediatricians and youth in the legislative process and help guide a new generation of engaged citizens by educating them about how bills can be influenced by pediatricians and families.



Program Goals:

- Advocate for children's health by providing legislative training to pediatric residents and expanding the program to include families and youth.
- Train future pediatricians and youth to be strong, confident, and effective advocates for children and families.

Program Barriers:

- It was difficult to schedule live educational programs around the schedule of 11 pediatric residency programs, school age youth, and working parents.
- The expense and time required for participants to travel to the Capitol. Six of eleven residency programs participated.



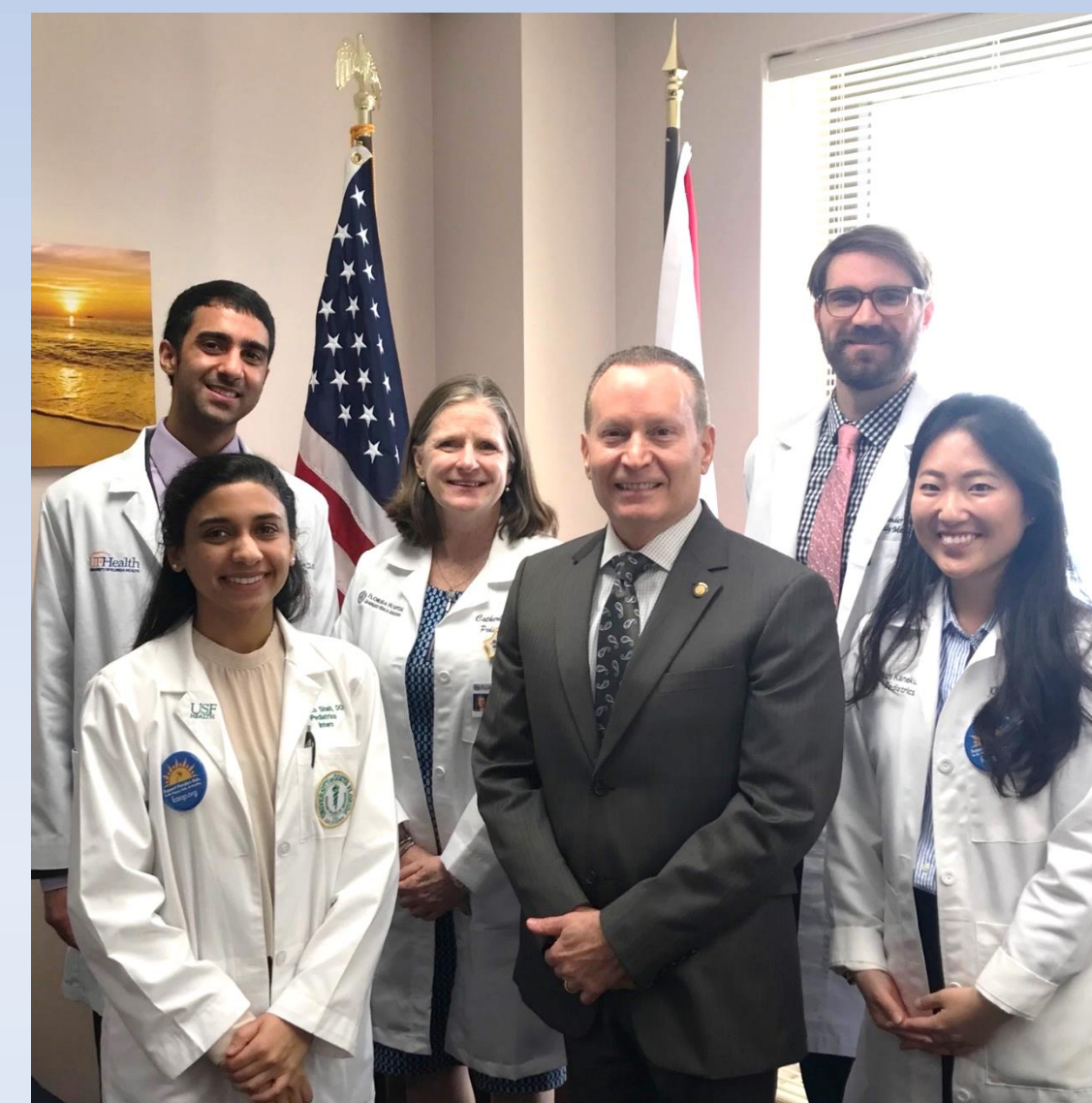
Doug Bell, lobbyist for the Florida Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics led an educational session for participants prior to the legislative session.

Participants learned about:

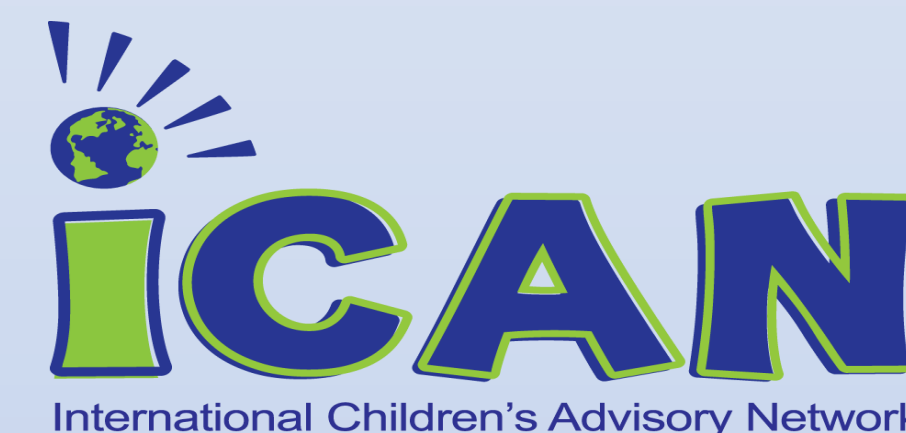
- Legislators who have worked on child health and welfare issues.
- How committee sessions are organized and their purpose.
- How pediatricians and individuals can educate legislators about issues affecting Florida's families and children.



Participants also received a tour of senate chambers and met with senator Aaron Bean. The iCAN KIDS FL members were able to participate in a mock legislative session and voted on a current bill.



Participants split their time between meeting legislative representatives, observing committee meetings, attending youth-led town halls and advocacy sessions, and interacting with advocates and families in the Chapter's two booths.



The families learned about the legislative process and received a "behind the scenes" tour in which they interacted with different advocates and legislative representatives. They interacted with pediatricians as potential partners for working towards improving healthcare.



The Chapter's Storybook Village Booth was hugely successful thanks to the leadership and energy of the youth. Children visiting the Capitol to attend Children's week activities were drawn to and engaged with the iCAN KIDS FL youth members running the Sun Safety booth more than with any adults assisting with the booth.



Resident Feedback:

- Residents were surprised by some of the testimony arguing against common sense initiatives.
- Residents found it helpful to hear questions kids asked and were able to gain perspective about what is important to youth.

Youth Participant Feedback:

- Youth were pleasantly surprised at the openness and kindness of Senator Bean and various legislators.
- Youth were able to see pediatricians as partners they can work with to improve child health.

Youth are critical for strengthening advocacy activities. They provide a reminder to all participants that all legislative changes impact them and their families directly. Youth also provide a fresh perspective on issues that may not have been considered or realized without their involvement.