

2024 Ray E. Helfer, MD, Award

Marny Dunlap, MD, FAAP



Since 2001, Dr. Marny Dunlap's career as a pediatrician has been marked by a profound commitment to the health and well-being of Oklahoma's children. This year, the Children's Trust Fund Alliance and the American Academy of Pediatrics recognize her exceptional dedication, awarding Dr. Dunlap the 2024 Ray E. Helfer, MD Award—a distinction honoring pediatricians who have made a lasting impact on child abuse prevention through collaboration with state children's trust funds.

Dr. Dunlap's journey in child advocacy is one of heart and hard work. From her first days as a medical resident in pediatrics at the University of Oklahoma (OU) Health Sciences Center (where she completed her residency from 1997 to 2000), she recognized the influential role of integrating medical care with education and advocacy, making prevention a pillar of her practice. Now a Professor in the Section of General & Community Pediatrics and holder of the CHF James Paul Linn Endowed Chair at the OU College of Medicine, Dr. Dunlap has become a leader in initiatives that promote resilience and lifelong learning for families across Oklahoma.

One of Dr. Dunlap's landmark contributions is her work with the Reach Out and Read program. In 2001, she established Oklahoma's first Reach Out and Read clinic, promoting early literacy by providing books and guidance on reading at pediatric checkups. Under her leadership, the program expanded to every OU pediatric primary clinic and three specialty clinics, including the Fostering Hope clinic, which provides care for children in foster care. As a dedicated advocate for child literacy, she holds multiple national roles in related programs and has positioned Oklahoma as a Reach Out and Read Affiliate to enhance caregiver-child bonding and literacy.

Dr. Dunlap's contributions extend beyond the clinic through her commitment to early childhood success. She is actively involved in the Oklahoma Clearinghouse for Early Childhood Success, where, she ensures that public-private partnerships for early childhood development meet rigorous standards. Since its founding, this clearinghouse has awarded over \$9 million, fostering quality and innovation in early childhood programming across Oklahoma.

Her work and dedication have earned her significant recognition, including the Special Achievement Award from the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) in 2016 and 2021, the Gretchen Hunsberger Medical Champion Award by Reach Out and Read in 2019, and the Childhood Immunization Champion Award from the CDC in 2018. These honors underscore her lifelong commitment to child advocacy and health.

To cultivate the next generation of pediatric advocates, she founded the Pediatric Resident Advocacy Collaboration, a unique program that equips medical residents with the skills to advocate for children in medical and legislative settings. This collaborative effort, bringing together faculty from four Oklahoma residency programs, teaches residents to turn their compassion for patients into meaningful action. Through this program, residents participated in advocacy events such as the 2024 Invest in Kids Day at the Capitol, learning how to amplify children's voices beyond the clinic.

Dr. Dunlap's recognition with the Ray E. Helfer, MD Award is a tribute to her vision, resilience, and advocacy. In a time when the need for prevention and family support systems has never been more essential, Dr. Dunlap's career exemplifies what is possible when care, commitment and community come together.



The Ray E. Helfer, MD, Award is presented each year by the Children's Trust Fund Alliance and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) to highlight the contributions of a pediatrician in local and national efforts to prevent child abuse and neglect. Dr. Helfer, a pediatrician, educator and pioneer in the prevention of child abuse, conceived the idea that "Children's Trust Funds" should be created in each state to ensure that our nation's children grow up nurtured, safe and free from harm. Every year, state children's trust and prevention funds provide more than \$300 million in direct funding, technical assistance and other supports to statewide and community-based child abuse prevention strategies.