2026 Ray E. Helfer, MD, Award

Ramkumar Jayagopalan, MD, FAAP



The Children's Trust Fund Alliance and the American Academy of Pediatrics are proud to present the **2026 Ray E. Helfer, MD Award to Ramkumar Jayagopalan, MD, FAAP (Dr. Ram)**, in recognition of his more than two decades of leadership and service dedicated to strengthening families, improving child well-being, and preventing child maltreatment.

A board-certified pediatrician at Carolina Pediatrics & Adolescent Care in Columbia, South Carolina, Dr. Ram has devoted his career to caring for children and adolescents while advancing prevention beyond the walls of the examination room. His work reflects the core principles of identifying challenges early, supporting families, responding sensitively to trauma, and building the systems and communities children need to thrive.

Since 2019, Dr. Ram has served as medical director for Quality Through Technology and Innovation in Pediatrics (QTIP), South Carolina's statewide pediatric quality improvement collaborative. Through this leadership, he has helped pediatric practices translate evidence into sustainable improvements that better support children and families. His work recognizes that preventing child maltreatment requires coordinated systems that identify family stress early, promote healthy development, and connect caregivers with meaningful support before a crisis occurs.

Dr. Ram brings the voice of a practicing pediatrician to statewide prevention policy as an at-large member of the South Carolina Children's Trust Board of Directors and chair of its Policy Committee. He has been a strong advocate for voluntary home visiting and other evidence-informed investments that help families build the tools, confidence, and connections needed to raise healthy children.

Through his leadership with the South Carolina Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, where he currently serves as president , Dr. Ram has advanced trauma-informed care, suicide prevention, and collaborative approaches linking health care, schools, and communities. As part of the advisory committee to SC DSS, he has helped them revamp their health care policy for the children under foster care in SC. His work has helped demonstrate the power of pediatricians as trusted partners in promoting safety, stability, and resilience.

A clinician, advocate, collaborator, and systems-builder, Dr. Ram has dedicated his career to ensuring that children and families receive support before challenges become crises. His leadership in trauma-informed care, pediatric quality improvement, suicide prevention, home visiting, and family-strengthening policy is a model for all pediatricians.

Through his enduring commitment to children and families, Dr. Ram has helped build a stronger foundation for prevention—one in which children can grow up safe, nurtured, resilient, and free from harm.

The Ray E. Helfer, MD Award provides us with an opportunity to highlight and recognize his important contributions.



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 funds provide more than $300 million in direct funding, technical assistance and other supports to statewide and community-based child abuse prevention strategies.