

COVID-19 Update #6

Dear Georgia Chapter Colleague:

The following is our update on the latest information on several key issues which we have been hearing from you about. Please contact the Chapter office if there are other ways, we can assist you. This information was put together from resources at the CDC, AAP and the Ga. Dept. of Public Health. Thank you for your Chapter membership.

- 1. Guidance from the Georgia AAP on Continuation of Well Child Visits During COVID-19 Pandemic**
- 2. Small business loans** as part of the COVID-19 stimulus package (CARES) recently signed by the president. Many practices may wish to utilize this resource and the most recent version allow for the forgiveness of the loans if it was used for certain purposes.
- 3. Telehealth Resources & Information** Many of our members' practices are quickly ramping up telehealth and telemedicine capacity to serve their patients without bringing them into their offices.
- 4. COVID Template to Practices for Parents**
- 5. Practice Management Update**

Pediatric Practice Management Institute is hosting its third webinar on the topic of Business Impact of COVID-19 on Pediatric Practices on April 2, 2020 at 6:00 p.m. (Central Time). This link provides access to previously recorded Business Impact of COVID-19 on Pediatric Practices webinars #1 and #2 and associated materials as well as registration for the event.

<https://www.pediatricsupport.com/covid19info>

Guidance from the Georgia AAP on Continuation of Well Child Visits During COVID-19 Pandemic

April 1, 2020

We have heard from many Georgia Chapter members reporting a drop in office visits, particularly well-child visits during the COVID-19 outbreak.

The Georgia Chapter strongly believes that well visits, especially during the first 24 months of life are essential and necessary. We share our members concerns that postponing these critical visits and immunization administration could lead to negative health consequences.

CDC Guidance at the time of the publication (check for latest!) states “If a practice can provide only limited well-child visits, healthcare providers are encouraged to prioritize newborn care and vaccination of infants and young children (through 24 months of age) when possible.” (Source: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/healthcare-facilities/index.html>.) The Georgia Chapter supports the CDC’s guidance and encourages practices to see patients needing or requesting catch-up immunizations.

We recognize every practice’s situation is unique and resources vary among practices and regions. We encourage all our members to consider their own situation to determine what is best for their practice and the families they serve.

Suggestions for adjustments practices may consider making to their usual clinical operations:

- Conduct well visits for newborns, infants and younger children up to 24 months who require immunizations and to reschedule well visits for those in middle childhood and adolescence to a later date.
- Dedicate specific morning hours for well visits and specific afternoon hours for sick visits. Be sure to allow for adequate time for cleaning and disinfecting all patient areas.
- Dedicate specific rooms for well visits and sick visits. For those operating in multiple sites, consider using one office for well child visits only.
- Utilize a “drive through” for sick visits where the provider can assess the patient in their vehicle.
- Increase use of telehealth/ telemedicine for any visit that can reasonably be conducted using this modality.

If you have other suggestions that have been successful in your practice, please share them with the Georgia Chapter via Noreen Dahill at ndahill@gaaap.org or Cordia Starling, RN at cstarling@gaaap.org. Thank you.

Small Business Loans

April 1, 2020

The Small Business Administration (SBA) is now offering loans to small businesses. SBA COVID-19 page: <https://www.sba.gov/page/coronavirus-covid-19-small-business-guidance-loan-resources#section-header-2>

More information on loans and the link to the application on Treasury page: <https://home.treasury.gov/cares>

Work with your attorney and/or accountant to discuss which of the following loans works best for you and your practice:

Economic Injury Disaster Loan Assistance (EIDL) - Under the EIDL program, the SBA makes loans available to small businesses and private non-profit organizations in designated areas of a state or territory to help alleviate economic injury caused by COVID-19. Contact the National Business Emergency Operations Center at: 202-212-8120.

Resource comparing EIDL to PPP options (posted on PPMA listserv yesterday) <https://www.krostcpas.com/news/the-economic-injury-disaster-loan-eidl-program-vs-the-paycheck-protection-program-ppp>

Paycheck Protection Plan (PPP) - May be to apply for this loan shortly here is an article from the Washington Post which outlines this loan:

WaPo article yesterday about the Paycheck Protection Program (which is the \$350b from CARES act) <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2020/03/30/heres-how-get-small-business-loan-under-349-billion-coronavirus-aid-bill/>

Click on the following to items that can assist you in your loan application

- Georgia Disaster Declaration
- SBA Georgia Fact Sheet
- SBA Disaster Assistance in Response to the Coronavirus

Telehealth

April 1, 2020

This update includes resources on telehealth. The Chapter is also standing up a Telehealth Committee to create resources to help our members expand their capacity to provide telehealth services. If you would like to join this group, please email feskew@gaaap.org

Georgia Partnership for Telehealth to Offer Free Telehealth Services to Rural Physicians

The Chapter has learned that the Georgia Rural Health Innovation Center at Mercer University School of Medicine is collaborating with the Georgia Partnership for Telehealth (GPT) to offer six months of free telehealth services to improve access to care for those living in rural areas.

This service will offer physicians whose patients primarily reside in a rural area use of GPT's new web-based telehealth consultation software, Pathways which can be accessed through a phone, tablet or computer. No installation of any additional software is required. The system operates on an encrypted, HIPAA-compliant network.

Enrollment begins by calling or emailing the Georgia Rural Health Innovation Center at (478) 301-4700 or info@georgiaruralhealth.org. An account, at no charge to the rural physician, will be established, and appointments for patients can begin immediately.

A map of rural areas can be viewed by clicking [here](#). To view the message issued by the Georgia Rural Health Innovation Center click [here](#). Information on Georgia's State Office of Rural Health visit as available at <https://dch.georgia.gov/divisionsoffices/state-office-rural-health>. For a map of the Georgia counties that are consider in rural, please click [here](#).

DCH Announces Telehealth Webinar

The Department of Community Health (DCH) and DXC Technology has announced that it will offer a Telehealth Webinar during the month of April 2020; the webinar will air at 5 different dates and times to allow Georgia Medicaid providers to be able to participate. Practice managers, billing staff, business associates, billing/service agents that submit Medicaid & PeachCare for Kids claims are encouraged to attend. The webinars will include important information on the following topics including, but not limited to:

- * Originating Site
- * Distance Site
- * Providers that are able to perform telehealth
- * Billing Requirements

The dates and times are as followed:

Thursday, April 9, 2020 at 9:30 am
Friday, April 10, 2020 at 11:00 am
Monday, April 13, 2020 at 1:00 pm
Thursday, April 16, 2020 at 3:00 pm

Monday, April 20, 2020 at 9:30 am

To register online, visit - <https://forms.gle/HiRLpwSYKPBpE8wBA>. An email confirmation of your registration will be sent to e-mail address provided during registration; be sure to list your email address correctly. If you have any questions regarding the April Telehealth Webinar, please contact DXC Technology via e-mail at GAworkshopregistration@dxc.com.

Telehealth and Telemedicine 101

Telehealth - the use of telecommunications technologies to deliver health-related services and information that support patient care, administrative activities, and health education.

CPT codes 99421 – 99423 indicate a telephone evaluation and management service by a physician or other qualified health care professional who may report evaluation and management services provided to an established patient, parent or guardian. The service must not originate from a related E/M service provided within the previous 7 days nor leading to an E/M service or procedure within the next 24 hours or soonest available appointment and includes 5-10 minutes of medical discussion.

Telemedicine - two-way live or streaming video, videoconferencing, store-and-forward imaging along with the internet, email, smart phones, wireless tools and other forms of telecommunication.

Source: <https://www.aap.org/en-us/professional-resources/practice-transformation/telehealth/Pages/What-is-Telehealth.aspx>

Message Template for Pediatric Practice to Use to Encourage Parents to Maintain Well-child visits especially when Immunizations are Due

April 1, 2020

To our Parents:

On behalf of everyone at (*Insert your Practice Name*), we hope you and your family are keeping well during these strange and uncertain times.

COVID-19 has disrupted our lives and we know you have questions about how to protect and care for your children during these uncertain times. Today, we want to provide answers to some important questions:

- 1) *I'm being told to Shelter-In-Place. Should my children still go to their well-visits and get their vaccines?*

Vaccines are very important, especially for young children under the age of 2 years. Vaccine-preventable diseases can cause serious infections and may even cause death. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, we need to make sure our most vulnerable patients are protected against these illnesses. Some vaccines require multiple doses to build up your baby's immunity. If vaccination rates fall, your children could be at risk for these preventable diseases. Kids can even be at risk for these diseases while remaining at home as some viruses are transmitted through dirt and others may be carried by adults who don't show any symptoms. Receiving vaccines will not compromise your child's ability to fight infections from illnesses, including COVID-19.

In addition to providing vaccines, your doctor will weigh and measure your child. It is important to follow a baby's growth pattern to ensure that any issues are caught early, before they become a health problem. Visits also include discussions about important developmental milestones, sleep, and bowel habits, which are critical for a healthy, growing child.

Please call your Pediatrician for recommendations about whether your child should come in for your well visit appointment. Together, we can weigh the risks of exposure to illness against the benefits of these important immunizations.

- 2) *What if my child gets sick with something other than COVID-19 or has other physical or mental health concerns?*

The most important thing to do if your child is sick is to call your Pediatrician. Don't overlook health concerns because of COVID-19. Your doctor will let you know if your child needs to be seen. They may even recommend a Telemedicine visit, allowing your child to be seen by a doctor without leaving home.

Many doctors are now seeing sick patients virtually through Facetime, Facebook Messenger, Skype, Zoom and other modalities. Minimizing the number of children coming into the office makes it safer for the patients who do need to be seen in-person.

Please don't let your sick children get sicker at home because you are afraid to come into the office. Be sure to call your Pediatrician and get their advice. Remember, you and your Pediatrician are a team with your children's best health interests as your number one goal.

3) *I have a newborn – what should I do to keep her safe?*

Newborns are especially vulnerable to infection, so it's very important that your baby be kept away from anyone who might be sick. There are also important reasons to take your baby to your doctor in the first few weeks after birth. This may seem like conflicting messaging, so here are some concrete ways to keep your baby safe:

- a. Restrict visitors because even people who do not have symptoms could be infected and carrying the virus.
- b. Ensure that you and anybody who is around your baby practice excellent hand hygiene. This means washing your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds before touching your baby, especially if you have touched any high-use objects like doorknobs, phones, etc. You should also thoroughly clean phones and other high-touch items at least once a day.
- c. Take your baby to the doctor for important check-ups. Newborns are at risk for weight loss and jaundice, which can both be concerning. Newborns should have their weight measured and jaundice level checked in the first 3-5 days after birth, and sometimes even more frequently than that. Newborns that did not get tested before being discharged from the hospital also require a heel stick for blood for "Newborn Screening" tests that screen for treatable diseases that can cause severe illness if not identified shortly after birth. Some newborns also require additional testing based on the screening results taken at the hospital.

4) *How will the doctor's office keep my child safe?*

Pediatrician's offices are working hard to keep you and your baby safe. Many have made significant adjustments to ensure your child's safety. For example, many practices will only schedule well-visits in the morning, after the office has been fully disinfected overnight. No sick visits are allowed at that time. Other offices have staff walk patients directly from their cars to the examination room, skipping the waiting room altogether. In general, exam rooms are disinfected between each use and staff use masks and gloves to keep germ transmission to a minimum. Ask your Pediatrician what his/her practice is doing to keep your children safe!

In summary, we are here to care for your children through this difficult time. Remember that well-child visits, especially those including immunizations, are extremely important now. **Your Pediatrician is ready to help you keep your child healthy through well-visits and management of new problems or chronic illnesses.** Please call us to discuss your child's health care needs and how to arrange for them to continue to be protected from illness.