



# COVID-19: Local Payer Updates

*Update #11 from the NYS AAP - Chapter 2 & 3*

## **PEDIATRIC COUNCIL**

*Your Pediatric Council addresses billing and payment issues with insurers. We strive to facilitate better working relationships between pediatricians and health insurance plans, and to improve quality of care for children.*

Dear NYS AAP - Chapter 2 Member,

As we continue to deal with the effects of the National Health Emergency on our patients and our practices, it remains our goal to keep our members updated with information from the payers in our region. Regulations and instructions are constantly in flux, and the information herein is accurate to the best of our knowledge as of December 7.

### **CRITICAL DEADLINE: DECEMBER 18th!**

New vaccines against SARS-CoV-2 are about to be released and shipped to the states for distribution. NYS DOH has produced a Report of the COVID-19 Vaccine Task Force ([https://www.governor.ny.gov/sites/governor.ny.gov/files/atoms/files/NYS\\_COVID\\_Vaccination\\_Program\\_Book\\_10.16.20\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.governor.ny.gov/sites/governor.ny.gov/files/atoms/files/NYS_COVID_Vaccination_Program_Book_10.16.20_FINAL.pdf)) which summarizes state policy on a vaccine, as well as more recent guidance based on anticipate deliveries of the vaccine to NYS facilities.

In order to be able to immunize your patients, AS WELL AS YOURSELVES, YOUR STAFF, AND OTHERS IN THE COMMUNITY, (should you choose to do so), it is critical that every pediatrician who wishes to administer any COVID-19 vaccine in New York State (outside of NYC) be registered through the Health Commerce System, and **complete the COVID-19 Vaccine Enrollment Application THROUGH THE HEALTH COMMERCE SYSTEM BY DECEMBER 18**. For providers in NYC, enrollment must be done through the CIR.

Further information is available at [COVID19Vaccine@health.ny.gov](mailto:COVID19Vaccine@health.ny.gov) (for providers outside of NYC) or [nycimmunize@health.nyc.gov](mailto:nycimmunize@health.nyc.gov) (for NYC providers.)

### **Some Insurers Not Adequately Paying for COVID-19 Testing In-house**

More offices are starting to offer COVID-19 testing in-house, using a variety of testing

platforms. We have received some reports of insurers paying far less than the cost of materials for these tests. If you note this on reviewing EOBs, please file a Hassle Factor Form with the AAP's Payer Advocacy Advisory Committee (PAAC) at this link: <https://www.aap.org/en-us/my-aap/Pages/Hassle-Factor-Form-for-Private-Payer.aspx>. Having this information from multiple sources enables PAAC to work for appropriate payments, but they need our input to identify the problem areas. Please keep your Pediatric Council updated as well.

## **CDC Shortage of Needles for Vaccine Administration**

As we continue to immunize as many children as possible, and prepare for the availability of COVID-19 vaccines, concerns have arisen about a shortage of needles for vaccine administration. [This document from the CDC](#) provides guidance for dealing with supply chain issues surrounding needles and syringes.

## **Update on Influenza Vaccine**

Most offices have received adequate supplies of influenza vaccine, although there are some areas where shipments have been delayed. IF YOU HAVE ORDERED 0.25 mL PRE-FILLED SYRINGES, the CDC has stated that this particular presentation will NOT be available this season. For Sanofi and GSK products, all children aged 6 months and up can be vaccinated with the 0.5 mL dose. More information is available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/acip/2020-2021/acip-table.htm>

## **Notices from Insurers About Cut Fee Schedules & Being Dropped from Insurer's Panel of Participating Physicians**

Several members have recently received notices from some insurers that their fee schedules are being cut. Unfortunately, fee schedules are a function of your contracts with the insurers, and most contain a clause giving the insurer the right to change fee schedules with a certain advance notice. If this is the case, your only choice may be to terminate your participation with the plan if you determine that the reduced fee schedule is too low for you to accept. Since this is an issue of your contract, there is little that your local AAP Chapter or the national AAP can do to assist you.

Other members have been notified that they are being dropped from an insurer's panel of participating physicians. If you receive such a notice, please notify us as soon as possible, and we will pass your information on to the Payer Advocacy Advisory Committee (PAAC) of the AAP. You may also contact the NYS Insurance Commissioner and file a complaint. While the insurer may be within their rights to do this, they are required to meet standards for "network adequacy." If your being dropped will leave gaps in participating provider coverage for your patients, the Insurance Commissioner may be able to provide assistance.

## **Update on Payment for Telehealth Services**

**There are no new updates to the following insurer policies at this time:**

### **Cigna:**

Cigna has implemented a new policy on coverage for virtual care, which is effective January 1, 2021 (or after the end of the Public Health Emergency.) They will be "reimbursing" (sic) for E/M visits at parity with face-to-face in person visits, using the -95 modifier and POS code 11 (not 02) for services provided starting on January 1. (While their updates state that

“wellness visits” will be included, the codes 99381-99395 are NOT currently on their list of covered codes.) More information is available at: <https://static.cigna.com/assets/chcp/resourceLibrary/medicalResourcesList/medicalDoingBusinessWithCigna/medicalDbwCVirtualCare.html>

**Aetna:**

Aetna has extended their coverage for telehealth visits through December 31, 2020. This includes extending all member cost-sharing waivers for in-network telemedicine visits for outpatient behavioral and mental health counseling services only for Aetna-insured Commercial plan members. It appears that cost-sharing (copayments and deductibles) are NOT waived for general medical care visits, however, so members should continue to collect this cost-sharing amount as appropriate. Aetna and self-insured plan sponsors, as appropriate, will continue to cover member cost-sharing for services included in the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (such as COVID-19 testing and visits resulting in a COVID-19 test). Self-insured plan sponsors offer this waiver at their discretion. See the Aetna FAQ at: <https://www.aetna.com/health-care-professionals/provider-education-manuals/covid-faq/telemedicine.html>.

**UHC:**

Coverage for telehealth for non-COVID related care extended FOR IN-NETWORK PROVIDERS through December 31, 2020 (ended July 24, 2020 for NON-COVID-related services by out-of-network providers, and will continue for COVID-related services by non-par providers through October 22, 2020.) Telehealth for COVID-related services will continue for the duration of the National Emergency. Ending cost sharing waiver for non COVID 9/30/20; for COVID related services, the cost-sharing waiver for both in- and out-of-network providers will continue for the duration of the national Emergency which is ongoing. See: <https://www.uhcprovider.com/en/resource-library/news/Novel-Coronavirus-COVID-19/covid19-telehealth-services/covid19-telehealth-services-telehealth.html>

**Anthem:**

Will end cost sharing waiver for non-COVID services 9/13; for COVID related care 12/31.

**Wellcare:**

No end date in sight as of now (no cost sharing for them as a Medicaid plan).

**Humana:**

Cost sharing waiver continuing through 12/31. No end date for coverage of telehealth visits is listed, and coverage is currently provided for telephone-only care as well.

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**REMINDERS:**

***The next two topics were shared in our last email, but we wanted to share them again in case they were missed.***

**CPT Coding Changes for 2021 - Reminder**

Everyone should be aware by now that the criteria for determining the appropriate E/M code for ambulatory visits will be changing on January 1, 2021. These changes will simplify documentation requirements, but are significantly different from current practice.

- More information is available from the AAP: <https://services.aap.org/en/practice-management/2021-office-based-em-changes/faqs-2021-office-based-em-changes/>
- Another summary is available at: <https://www.medicaleconomics.com/view/major->

[coding-changes-for-2021-explained](#)

- In addition, Sue Kressly, MD FAAP has shared a video discussion which was originally produced for users of Office Practicum, but which can be viewed at: <https://youtu.be/-WJx63RYCHo>

## Requests for Documentation of Visits

If you receive requests for documentation of visits during the time your office was closed, we would like to hear about it. Some offices have received requests for copies of telehealth visits when a diagnosis of pharyngitis was made and no throat culture or strep screen was done. Certain quality measures may not be met this year, and no practice should be penalized for circumstances beyond their control.

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With our best wishes,

Jesse Hackell, MD, FAAP

[runhack@aol.com](mailto:runhack@aol.com)

Co-Chair, NYS AAP - Chapter 2 & 3 Pediatric Council

Vice President, NYS AAP - Chapter 3

Steve Goldstein, MD, FAAP

[SJG34@Cornell.edu](mailto:SJG34@Cornell.edu)

Co-Chair, NYS AAP - Chapter 2 & 3 Pediatric Council

Immediate Past President, NYS AAP - Chapter 2

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## Useful Info from the National AAP

Once again, we want to call attention to the vast amount of guidance, information and advice that has been produced by the AAP during the current pandemic. There is a trove of helpful information for practices, providers and families available at:

<https://services.aap.org/en/pages/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-infections/>

The Payer Advocacy Advisory Committee, chaired by Sue Kressly of PA, is dedicated to helping pediatricians address all manner of issues with insurance companies and other payers, including Medicaid. PAAC recently posted the following resources available through the National AAP:

- Payment Advocacy for Telehealth: [https://downloads.aap.org/DOPA/Telehealth\\_2\\_rev.pdf](https://downloads.aap.org/DOPA/Telehealth_2_rev.pdf)
- State Notices about Telehealth in responses to COVID-19: <https://downloads.aap.org/DOCCSA/State-Telehealth-Notices.pdf>
- FAQs for Medicaid and CHIP responses to COVID-19: <https://www.medicaid.gov/state-resource-center/downloads/covid-19-faqs.pdf>
- Coding and Billing for Non-direct care: <https://downloads.aap.org/AAP/PDF/COVID%202020.pdf>

The AAP Coding Hotline is available to answer coding questions via email at [aapcodinghotline@aap.org](mailto:aapcodinghotline@aap.org). In addition, a recording of a webinar on Coding During the COVID-19 Pandemic is available for viewing [here](#).

## The NYS AAP - CHAPTER 2 is YOUR Local AAP Chapter

The New York State American Academy of Pediatrics (NYS AAP) is comprised of three local AAP Chapters, Chapters 1, 2, and 3, who work together as a coalition.

Your Chapter, the NYS AAP - Chapter 2, has 1,600 members in 4 counties: Brooklyn, Queens, Nassau and Suffolk.

To learn more about Chapter 2, please view our [Member Value Flyer](#) which describes the value of Chapter membership.

### **CONTACT US - (We'd love to hear from you!)**

President: Shetal Shah, MD, FAAP [shetaldoc@hotmail.com](mailto:shetaldoc@hotmail.com)

Vice President: Robert Lee, DO, FAAP [rlee@aap.net](mailto:rlee@aap.net)

Secretary: Sanjivan Patel, MD, FAAP [sapatel@wyckoffhospital.org](mailto:sapatel@wyckoffhospital.org)

Treasurer: Pinchi Srinivasan, MD, FAAP [nigdoc@gmail.com](mailto:nigdoc@gmail.com)

Executive Director: Jessica Geslani [jgeslani@aap.org](mailto:jgeslani@aap.org)

Director of Policy, Advocacy & External Relations: Elie Ward, MSW [eward@aap.net](mailto:eward@aap.net)

New York State American Academy of Pediatrics (NYS AAP) - Chapter 2  
516-326-0310 | [Follow us on Twitter](#) | [www.ny2aap.org](http://www.ny2aap.org)

