

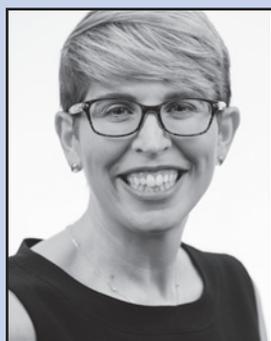


# The Alabama Pediatrician

First Quarter 2023

## From the President

I hope this newsletter finds you well and enjoying the start of 2023. As the President of the Alabama



**Nola Jean Ernest, MD, FAAP**  
Chapter President

Chapter, I am thrilled to share with you that our Chapter board recently completed its strategic planning for the year, and I am excited to announce our priorities for the coming months.

In today's fast-paced world, it is crucial that we remain both accessible and

connected to the individuals and organizations that make up our community. As a result, one of our top priorities is to explore innovative ways to communicate with both member and non-member pediatricians in Alabama, to share important information about Chapter activities as well as provide additional avenues for education. By the time we have launched the next newsletter, I anticipate that we will have some exciting news to share with you on this front.

Despite our focus on exploring new communication channels, our primary focus remains on serving our members. As a member-centric organization, we are dedicated to providing valuable resources, educational opportunities, and support for your practices. The focus of these resources will be practice management, pediatrician resilience in the face of vaccine hesitancy, mental health, advocacy, and quality improvement. Whether it's through our annual conferences, local events, or online resources, we are committed to helping our members succeed and thrive in their practices. Join us Memorial Day weekend at The Lodge at Gulf State Park to learn more!

To help us remain member-focused, we will be sending out a survey to our members in the Spring

## Register now for our 2023 Spring Meeting to be held at The Lodge at Gulf State Park on Memorial weekend, May 25-28!

The Chapter executive office and our CME Chair Haidee Custodio, MD, FAAP, have developed a fantastic agenda for the 2023 Spring Meeting, which will offer 11.0 hours of quality pediatric CME AND MOC Part 2. Spring is in the air now and with it, warmer months to lift our spirits. And what better way to enjoy warmer weather than at the beach—with colleagues! And better yet, you can bring your families to stay through Monday, Memorial Day!

Set for May 25-28, this year's meeting will include the latest and most relevant clinical topics as well as a practice management emphasis. Here is the line-up: ACL Injury Risk and Prevention in High School Athletes; How Obesity Affects Orthopedic Conditions of Childhood; Launching a New State of Mind (talk by Mental Health Commissioner Kim Boswell); Evaluation & Treatment of the Slow-Growing Breastfed Infant; A Teen Vaccine Workshop: Applying ACHIA Teen Vaccine Collaborative Lessons; Learned to Your Practice; Cases & Math: The Slow-Growing Breastfed Infant; Do I Work with the Wrong People?; Health Equity: Let's Be Part of the Solution; Syphilis and HIV in Pregnancy: Management of Infants; Growth as a Biomarker of Health in Children: Review and Update; and 2022 AAP Clinical Practice Guideline Revision for Management of Hyperbilirubinemia in the Newborn Infant: "Wow, That's Different!"

In addition, there will be two sponsored symposia:

- Biliary Atresia: Updates and Thoughts on Primary Liver Transplantation as Treatment, sponsored by Children's of Alabama (Friday lunch)
- Post-Discharge Nutrition Practices in the Premature Infant, sponsored by Reckitt/Mead Johnson (Saturday lunch)

Of course, the Lodge and Gulf State Park offer the perfect environment for your family to relax and enjoy the beautiful surroundings. In addition, Reach Out and Read-Alabama is preparing for its 10th annual Grand Pediatric Pentathlon; get ready to join your colleagues to participate in the five events at The Lodge!

Scan the QR code to get all of the information and register by April 24 to get the early bird rates!



continued on page 2

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**Alabama Chapter – AAP****Mission:**

The mission of the Alabama Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics is to obtain optimal health and well-being for all children in Alabama, and to provide educational and practice support for its membership so the highest quality of medical care can be achieved.

**Values:**

Children must be highly valued by society.

Each child must develop to his/her highest potential.

Children must have strong advocates for they have no voice of their own.

Pediatricians are essential to achieving optimal child health. The work of pediatricians, and the profession of pediatrics, must endure and grow even stronger.

**Vision:**

Children in Alabama are happy and healthy; Alabama pediatricians are professionally fulfilled and financially secure.

**From the President continued from page 1**

to gather feedback on how we can best serve you. We want to hear from you about what types of communication channels you prefer and what information is most important to you. The data collected from this survey, which we anticipate repeating every three years, will be instrumental in shaping future Chapter priorities.

In conclusion, I am proud to be leading the AL-AAP and am eager to continue working with our members and partners to make a positive impact in the lives of children and families in our state. If you have any questions or suggestions, please don't hesitate to reach out to me or a member of our Chapter board.

**M E D I C A I D N E W S****End of Public Health Emergency to prompt changes in Medicaid policies among others***Chapter weighs in on draft telemedicine policy*

As has been announced by the Biden Administration, the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency (PHE) is set to end on May 11, 2023. What does this mean for pediatrics in Alabama? In addition to what Tonya Pitts noted in the PMA update on page 13 regarding the commercialization of COVID vaccinations/testing, one of the most important changes to be expected is the lifting of a number of the temporary policies that Alabama Medicaid had instituted during the PHE.

While we will be sharing more details of various expected changes as a result of the end of the PHE when we know them (from the national AAP, our state payors and others), one area that the Chapter leadership has already weighed in on is a new telemedicine policy, the draft of which Alabama Medicaid released for comment on February 13.

The Chapter Executive Committee and Pediatric Council members carefully looked at the draft policy and provided suggestions to help Medicaid children and the pediatricians who serve them, such as:

- Assuring that the age of medical consent is correctly referenced in the policy;
- Advocating for the continuation of telephone-only visits, the exclusion of which would create inequities for families without high-speed internet and cellular data coverage;
- Advocating for telemedicine to continue to be allowed for sick visits;
- Clarifying that providers and their regular patients cannot always be located in the same state; and
- Assuring that consent for telemedicine is done in a reasonable manner that is not burdensome for the patient.

The final telemedicine policy will be released in April. Look for that and other important information related to the end of the PHE over the next two months.

**End to Medicaid “continuous enrollment” begins April 1**

In December, Congress passed the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023 (CAA), which included significant changes to the “continuous enrollment” condition outlined in the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA). The Families First Act ensured that no recipient was disenrolled from Medicaid during the Public Health Emergency (PHE), even if he/she no longer qualified. This condition will no longer be linked to the end of the PHE, and will now end on April 1, 2023 as a result of the new law.

## News From Medicaid continued from page 2

To that end, the Alabama Medicaid Agency is preparing for the end of the continuous enrollment condition as well as the end of the temporary Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP) increase, which was another provision in the CAA.

Beginning April 1, states may terminate Medicaid enrollment for individuals no longer eligible. Furthermore, the FFCRA's temporary FMAP increase will gradually reduce and phase down quarterly through December 31, 2023, with the expectation that states return to normal FMAP percentages in January 2024.

It is critically important for recipients to be aware of their eligibility for Medicaid and potential changes to their coverage as a result of continuous coverage ending.

You can help assure that your patients avoid lapses in coverage by alerting families to make sure they have updated their addresses using the “Yellow Postcard” (delivered to offices last summer by Medicaid staff; linked below), as well as directing them to other coverage they may qualify for. Medicaid has produced a new information sheet for recipients that explains for them to look for their Medicaid renewal in their mailboxes during the month they normally renew coverage (they will not automatically lose coverage on April 1). These resources and a tip sheet for providers are linked below; the Chapter will be sharing any new resources as we work with Medicaid on this over the next few months and beyond.

- PDF of Yellow Postcard - includes QR code linked to Form 295 (address change request)  
English - <https://bit.ly/3J0eKdZ>  
Spanish - <https://bit.ly/3KMPV7D>
- Informational flier for patients/families - includes information and QR code - <https://bit.ly/3SG2dQY>
- Tip Sheet for Providers - <https://bit.ly/3YgaI6C>  
For all of the links, and to stay updated on this, visit <https://bit.ly/3Y5mNLS>.

## Medicaid extends maternity coverage to 12 months postpartum

The Alabama Medicaid Agency received approval from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) to extend postpartum coverage to pregnant Medicaid recipients from 60 days to 12 months with an effective date of October 1, 2022.

Medicaid covers more than half of the births in the state. To help improve maternal health, the Agency requested this postpartum coverage extension and plans to evaluate the usage of benefits and maternal health outcomes (e.g., screening for clinical depression, decreasing the prevalence of hypertension and diabetes during pregnancy, and increasing the rate of contraceptive care). In 2021-2022, the Chapter advocated heavily for this coverage along with other partners.

During the COVID-19 public health emergency (PHE), all states were required to provide continuous coverage to Medicaid recipients in order to be eligible for enhanced federal matching funds under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act. As a result, postpartum coverage has been continuous since the start of the pandemic. After March 31, 2023, when the continuous enrollment requirement ends, pregnant recipients will keep their Medicaid coverage until 12 months after their pregnancy ends. Recipients will then need to reapply to see if they qualify for other Medicaid programs.

## Alabama Medicaid seeks Public Health Physician Director

The Alabama Medicaid Agency, Montgomery Central Office, seeks to fill a position of a Public Health Physician Director (40434).

## How to Contact Your Chapter Leaders

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## Event Calendar

May 25 – 28, 2023  
2023 Spring Meeting &  
Pediatric Update  
The Lodge at Gulf State Park  
Gulf Shores, AL

September 8-10, 2023  
2023 Annual Meeting & Fall  
Pediatric Update  
(& the 2023 Practice  
Management Workshop)  
Ross Bridge Resort  
Birmingham, AL

October 20-24, 2023  
2023 AAP National  
Conference & Exhibition  
Washington, DC

### News From Medicaid continued from page 3

This position is responsible for providing clinical leadership and guidance to Alabama Medicaid in coordination with the Commissioner's office. This highly advanced professional, administrative, and medical position provides guidance on medical-related services within the Agency. Work involves assisting Agency officials in making determinations of level and quality of medical care provided to recipients by healthcare providers. Duties also include serving as a medical consultant in the development and modification of healthcare policies and procedures, and the implementation of healthcare delivery systems statewide. Work is performed with a high degree of independence and professional judgment. This is a great opportunity for a physician who wants to provide clinical guidance in an administrative setting.

The position offers a competitive salary and benefits, including: a desirable work schedule (40-hour work week, typically Monday – Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.); health insurance coverage (medical, dental and vision); and paid time off (including state holidays, annual and sick time).

If you are interested in this position, please call Alabama Medicaid at (334) 242-5600 for more information.

## Child resilience grant links pediatricians in four corners of the state with home visiting and parent resource providers in their local areas

In the Fall, through the vision of Elizabeth Dawson, MD, FAAP, of Troy, the Alabama Chapter-AAP secured a small grant from the American Academy of Pediatrics to work with the Alabama Prevent Child Abuse chapter (the Alabama Department of Child Abuse & Neglect Prevention/Children's Trust Fund) to build child resilience through partnerships.

With the help of a leadership team with representatives from numerous organizations, the partners planned breakfast roundtables held in December and January to bring together pediatricians and home visiting/parent resource providers in four communities: Dothan, Tuscaloosa, Huntsville and Opelika.

These forums provided an opportunity for physicians to connect with the home-visiting and parenting resource providers in their area, with a goal of creating partnerships to strengthen families and communities as extensions of the pediatric medical home. At each meeting, table work included sharing resources to help pediatricians locate resources for patients and families that will ultimately prevent child abuse and foster resilience.

At the end of each meeting, postcards were distributed for the attendees to note some take-away ideas that they were excited to explore further. These postcards were collected, noted, and will be mailed back to each attendee as a follow-up. Additionally, in the last few weeks, the Chapter digitally collected information and resources from the local providers, and is in the process of building a webpage with links to these resources.

"The breakfast forums were a great success and provided a protected space and time for the pediatricians to form meaningful

*This project was a follow-up to the Chapter's 2022 domestic violence project. The outgrowth of that project was the Blueprint on Supporting Families Impacted by Domestic Violence, which can be found on the [opposite] page. We encourage pediatricians to begin using the blueprint in practice.*



Sarah Germanson, MD, FAAP, standing, shares what she and other pediatricians at her table learned during the roundtable discussions at the Dothan breakfast, held in December.

# BLUEPRINT FOR ADDRESSING DV in the Pediatric Health Setting



## Six steps to prepare your practice

### 1 Build buy-in for your DV/SA program

Consider a practice-wide meeting or including it in an all-staff meeting so that all employees understand the importance and their role

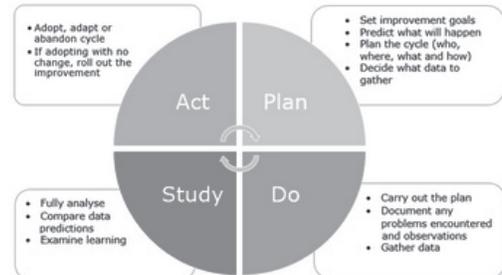
### 2 Support staff in addressing their own experiences of violence

Provide external mental health contacts and resources/local DV agency

### 3 Create or update policies or protocols on IPV/HT

- Sample protocol: <https://bit.ly/3RKN13v>
- Pediatric health care providers provide Universal Education like a safety card, hotline numbers 1-800-799-SAFE [thehotline.org](http://thehotline.org), or other resources to every parent.
- Pediatric health care providers see parents alone for portion of visit to discuss domestic violence.
- Pediatric health care providers utilize trauma informed practices when making a report.
- Pediatric health settings have a policy that every adolescent patient is seen alone for some part of the visit to discuss adolescent relationship abuse.
- Develop a formal partnership with a domestic violence program using the following MOU (available on the AL-AAP website: <https://bit.ly/3RjfOwh>)
- Practice designates "IPV Prevention Champion" who is responsible for ensuring all staff are trained and aware of IPV policies and protocols
- Leadership team shares sample scripts that pediatric clinical teams can tailor for their setting, including specific scripts for telehealth visits (<https://bit.ly/3TPC5Ds>) and workflow example (see protocol above)
- Consider use of the CUES model to incorporate these elements: <https://bit.ly/3Dbx4Q1>

### 4 Measure QI



### 5 Enhance the clinic environment by displaying patient / provider tools

Promoting Resiliency Infographic:

<https://bit.ly/3D6lggs>

CUES Poster: <https://bit.ly/3qkZFKW>

### 6 Document & code, inc. time codes!

**ICD10: Z60.8** – Other Problems related to social environment; Z63.9 – Problems related to primary support group unspec; Z62.9– Problems Related to Upbringing Unspec; Other family member perp of maltreatment and neglect Y07.499

**Time:** 10-19 minutes 99212, 20-29 99213, 30-39 minute 99214, 40-54 minutes 99215

**96161** – caregiver-focused assessment

## Child resilience grant continued from page 4



Sarah Smith T, MD, FAAP, discusses her patients' needs with child resource providers in Opelika.

initial relationships with the providers," said Dr. Dawson. "There were many 'aha' moments as pediatricians found out about services they had no idea existed in their own communities!"

"It was evident that these discussions could continue well past the allotted time," said Sallye Longshore, director of ADCANP/CTF. "We are hopeful that more of these forums can be scheduled in the future for further connections to be made."

Meanwhile, follow-up local meetings between pediatricians and these service providers, such as family support centers, have already occurred. The state leadership team is pondering ways to help guide the communities to further continue the conversations, in addition to providing the web site with resources collected.

"This project was one of the most gratifying for our staff and pediatricians, because it provided a much-needed, in-person opportunity to connect with child resource providers in their own communities," said Linda Lee, APR, Chapter Executive Director. "This grant opportunity fueled the fire for the attendees who participated, and we anticipate relationships to continue based on what we saw at these meetings."

## Chapter's newly formed Mental Health Committee moves forward newly established priorities for child behavioral health

The Chapter's goal of addressing children's mental health concerns has taken a giant leap since our 2022 Annual Meeting in September. At that conference, which featured a number of mental health-related topics, a group of pediatricians with a strong interest in mental health came together to begin discussing ways to unify their work under one umbrella.

Following this meeting, the Chapter conducted a member survey on mental health to further determine our priorities and specific goals. A formal Mental Health Committee was established, led by Shawn Cecil, Area 2 Representative on the Chapter Executive Board. The Committee arranged an inaugural sit-down with the Alabama Department of Mental Health Commissioner Kim Boswell, establishing a quarterly meeting schedule with her to begin to align more seamlessly with the work they are doing for children's mental health.

A major concern identified by our mental health survey was the lack of communication from the state's Community Mental Health Centers to referring pediatricians. Concerns regarding HIPAA were discussed at the February meeting with Commissioner Boswell, and resulted in a plan to jointly host an educational training of Community Mental Health Center representatives to educate them on the fact that HIPAA allows for communication of PHI for the course of treatment and continuity of care.

Concurrently, the Chapter has advocated to payors during recent Pediatric Council meetings about the need for coverage of mental health services provided by pediatricians, especially for children covered by government plans that are not presently compliant with the mental health parity law. These discussions, primarily with Blue Cross Blue Shield, are continuing.

Meanwhile, we are looking forward to a session on May 26 at the Spring Meeting, at which Commissioner Boswell will share ways in which pediatricians can connect with mental health providers, including infant & early childhood mental health consultants across the state.



Shawn Cecil, MD, FAAP, (left) and Marsha Raulerson, MD, FAAP, (right) meet with Commissioner Kim Boswell in February, along with other pediatricians participating via Zoom.



## The Resource Every Parent Needs

The Parenting Assistance Line (PAL) is a free service available to anyone who wants information and support in becoming a more confident parent or caregiver. If you have a parenting question or just need a sympathetic ear, give us a call, text or visit our website to chat online.

866-962-3030

PAL.UA.EDU



Parenting Assistance Line

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA®



## Chapter will focus on improving policies for children in 2023 Legislative Session

The Regular Session of the Alabama Legislative begins in March (after an expected Special Session) and the Chapter is armed with its Legislative Agenda, voted on by the Executive Board in January. Our 2023 priorities for the year are as follows:

We advocate for:

- Increased vaccination rates among Alabama youth
- Improving child health through adequate Medicaid and CHIP funding and Medicaid expansion
- Protection of the Medical Home and the practice of medicine
- Amending Alabama's Chemical Endangerment Law
- Adequate funding for birth to 5 services

### 2023 Educational Priorities

- Strengthening Alabama's Child Passenger Safety Law
- Support for children and families affected by mental health issues
- Prevention of firearm-related injuries in children

### 19th annual Pediatric Legislative Day set for April 11

Join fellow colleagues as we advocate for children with one voice at our 19th annual Pediatric Legislative Day, to be held in conjunction with VOICES for Alabama's Children's Advocacy Day on Tuesday morning, April 11, 2023.

This is an opportunity for us to come together to learn about the state legislative process and issues affecting children and pediatrics in general, and meet with your lawmakers. All Chapter members are strongly encouraged to attend so that we can speak with one voice!

The agenda will begin with breakfast and continue with a state agency panel discussion and comments from lawmakers, followed by a pediatrics-specific session at 11 a.m. and then visits with your legislators. Please register now by using the QR code. We hope to see you in Montgomery on April 11!

Also, visit the Chapter website at [www.alaap.org](http://www.alaap.org) for the detailed Legislative Agenda, along with talking points on various issues.



A group of attendees from the 2022 Pediatric Legislative Day



## Did You Know? First Class Pre-K

By Madeleine Blancher, MD, FAAP, Chapter Early Childhood Champion

For almost 10 years, the Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education's Office of School Readiness has offered high-quality, voluntary pre-k programs throughout the state. This free program represents the commitment that Alabama has made to address access to excellent early childhood education. This program has been in operation since 2013, but, unfortunately, many pediatricians are unaware of its existence.

First Class Pre-K is committed to providing the children it serves with the skills to be successful in school. These attributes include an enthusiasm for learning, appropriate communication skills, social and emotional regulation, and problem-solving skills. The teachers are trained in early childhood development and have access to an early childhood mental health consultant, who can help them with the more challenging student. This service will hopefully decrease the number of students who are "suspended" because of their big emotions. The students who attend such programs tend to do better in school, with less remediation. First Class Pre-K prepares the children for kindergarten.

Registration for this program usually takes place in January for the following school year. It is open to all children who are residents of Alabama and are four years old by September. Parents can apply for certain schools. Admission is determined by a lottery system, which allows for a diverse population in the classroom.

More information on the program is available at <https://children.alabama.gov/for-families/first-class-pre-k/>.

*Editor's Note: For the last decade, the Alabama Chapter-AAP has advocated through its State Legislative Agenda and at its annual Pediatric Legislative Day for full funding of the state's proposed budget for First Class Pre-K, which has grown incrementally each year with an end goal of serving all age-eligible children in Alabama.*

## ACHIA Primary Care Practices Exceed Teen Vaccine Goals

by Cason Benton, MD, FAAP, Medical Director, Alabama Child Health Improvement Alliance

Preventing illness through vaccinations is foundational to pediatric care. During the pandemic, either because of decreased patient visits or through caregiver concerns about vaccines, vaccination rates protecting young teens from tetanus, pertussis, meningococcus, and cancers decreased. The Alabama Department of Public Health's ImmPRINT registry indicates that for 11- to 13-year-olds, only 17 percent of patients were up to date on the vaccines for this age group: tetanus-diphtheria-pertussis (Tdap), 60 percent; human papillomavirus (HPV), 17 percent, and meningococcal (MenACWY), 51 percent (data as of July 13, 2021).

### #StayWell 2022: A Teen Vaccine Quality Improvement (QI) Learning Collaborative increases vaccinations statewide

In 2022, 14 Alabama practices led by Heather Taylor, MD, FAAP from University Medical Center in Tuscaloosa worked collaboratively to increase teen vaccines by five percent over nine months using QI approaches. After assessing current clinic processes, clinic teams selected one or more change ideas to optimize vaccinations based on national recommendations.

Practices completed ACHIA's self-paced educational modules from national vaccine and vaccine hesitancy experts (Tamera Coyne-Beasley, MD, MPH, FAAP; David Kimberlin, MD, FAAP; and Gregory Zimet, PhD, FSAHM), who also led lively discussions on these topics during monthly webinars.

QI coaches helped practices use tools such as Key Drivers, SMART Aims, Plan-Do-Study-Act cycles, Pareto Charts, and run charts during the monthly webinars. The most beneficial aspects of the collaborative noted by participants were the shared common barriers and ideas to overcome those barriers during peer-to-peer discussions.

### Teen vaccines meet or exceed aims

The collaborative aim to increase Tdap, HPV, and MenACWY vaccinations by five percent was met and exceeded for all three. Participants said that the most impactful changes were:

- offering vaccines at younger ages and visits other than health supervision visits;
- establishing pre-clinic nursing chart reviews and huddles to assess vaccine needs;
- standing orders and using evidence-based communication strategies.

In addition to meeting the goal of improving vaccination rates, clinic teams also valued obtaining CME and ABP Maintenance of Certification Part II and IV credit as well as the enhanced team-building.

### Sustaining Improvements

Participating practices serve as the medical home for 10 percent of Alabama's 9- to 13-year-olds. With sustained improved vaccination rates, there will be substantial decreases in preventable illnesses and cancers in the decades to come. To support the continuation of best practices, ACHIA will provide annual vaccination rate data to practices for the next several years.

### Improving your clinic's vaccination rates

Those who did not participate in the collaborative can still apply the lessons learned in their practices by:

- Accessing ACHIA resources found at <https://achia.org/resources/past-projects>. Begin with the Key Driver to craft your measurable aims and review hundreds of change ideas. View here: <https://bit.ly/3Ze8S78>
- Participating in the ACHIA Teen Vaccine Mini-Workshop led by Dr. Taylor at the Chapter's Spring meeting in May, which will emphasize peer-to-peer learning.

## #StayWell2022



## A Teen Vaccine

ACHIA  
Alabama Child Health Improvement Alliance

QI Learning  
Collaborative

## Nominate colleagues for Chapter awards

Carden Johnston Leadership, Marsha Raulerson Advocacy, Early Career Physician awards

In 2011, the Chapter began a tradition of giving two prestigious awards, the Carden Johnston Leadership Award and the Marsha Raulerson Advocacy Award, named in honor of these two Chapter members who have given so much to pediatrics in Alabama. In 2022, the Chapter added the Early Career Physician Award to recognize an early career pediatrician who has gone above and beyond during this phase of his/her journey as a pediatrician.

The Chapter Executive Board is currently calling for nominations for these awards, which will be given at the Annual Meeting in September. Please read the criteria for each by visiting the links below; submission of materials is due to the Chapter office at [llee@alaap.org](mailto:llee@alaap.org) by June 15.

- Criteria for Carden Johnston Leadership Award - <https://bit.ly/3MeTukc>

- Criteria for Marsha Raulerson Advocacy Award - <https://bit.ly/3H2scN3>

- Criteria for Early Career Physician Award - <https://bit.ly/3zfL6OR>

### Best Vaccination Practices

- Maintain immunization registries
- Standardize standing orders and reminder/recall workflows
- Create a culture supportive of vaccinations
- Expand opportunities to vaccinate
- Understand vaccine hesitancy and utilize evidence-based communication.

## Reach Out and Read All About It!

Pediatric Pentathlon celebrates 10 years in 2023

It all began with an idea.

What began as an idea from Alabama Chapter-American Academy of Pediatrics member and Reach Out and Read-Alabama provider Grant Allen, MD, FAAP, has grown to be the signature fundraising event of ROR-AL at the Alabama Chapter-AAP's Spring Meeting each year.

Dr. Allen's vision of having a fun event that meeting attendees and their families could participate in while enjoying the amenities of the meeting venue while supporting ROR-AL has raised over \$123,000 in the last nine years!

We are excited to celebrate our 10th annual Grand Pediatric Pentathlon May 26-27, 2023 as we return to The Lodge at Gulf State Park.

All of the events that have always been part of the pentathlon – biking, walking, kayaking, swimming, and, of course, reading – will be completed in the beautiful setting of the Gulf of Mexico and Gulf State Park. An exciting new aspect of the pentathlon—a class taught by Sandcastle University—will take place after the group fun run/walk on Friday afternoon. Events can be completed by participants throughout the day on Friday and Saturday for eligibility to win great prizes!

We encourage all attendees at the Spring meeting to participate in this fun event.

“The Grand Pediatric Pentathlon has,



Grant Allen, MD, FAAP and his family at the first GPP in 2014

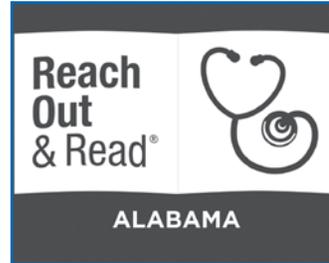
from the first brainstorming session, brought me and so many others great joy! It is not only a great way to raise money for Reach Out and Read, but it also helps us connect to each other - including with our families at our professional meeting,” Allen commented. “Building those connections to my colleagues and watching families grow is near to our hearts as pediatricians, and why wouldn't we enjoy that at our meetings too?”

We would like to thank the Medical Association of Alabama (MASA), Fair Advantage Consortium and Jackson Thornton & Company for their continued sponsorship of the event. MASA has sponsored the event since its beginning 10 years ago and Jackson Thornton joined as a sponsor the second year. Fair Advantage has sponsored four different events over the years.

A special thank you to All About Books as they join us as the Storybook sponsor of this year's event as we both celebrate milestone anniversaries. “In honor of your 10th anniversary, and our 20th anniversary, we are excited to be the Storybook Sponsor this year. We very much value the relationship we have with Reach Out and Read Alabama,” said Sarah Pelkey, Director of Sales and Marketing. “It was so great to be able to meet Amy in person at the Reach Out and Read National Conference last October and we thank you for this opportunity to further partner with Reach Out and Read Alabama!”

Visit <https://www.roralabama.org/grand-pediatric-pentathlon> for

the most up-to-date information on the 10th anniversary celebration including sponsorship and door prize opportunities.

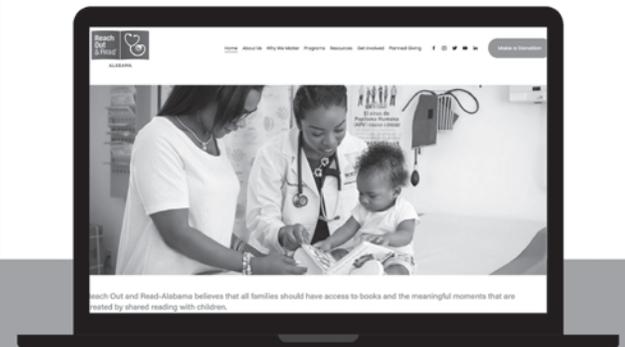


Reach Out and Read Roundtable returns to the Spring Meeting Building on the success of last year's roundtable, we once again invite all Reach Out and Read-Alabama site coordinators, medical

directors, or anyone with an interest in Reach Out and Read to stop by our Roundtable session on Friday, May 26 from 1 p.m. to 1:45 p.m. immediately following the Strolling Desserts in the Exhibits. Amy and Salina will be there to meet you, answer your questions, and discuss current topics affecting ROR sites. This is a great time to meet your ROR-Alabama staff as well as your ROR counterparts from other practices. We look forward to seeing you there!

### Reach Out and Read-Alabama launches newly designed website

We revamped our website to better showcase our work and celebrate our impact. Visit the site to see what's new!



[WWW.RORALABAMA.ORG](http://WWW.RORALABAMA.ORG)

Reach Out and Read-Alabama is proud to launch its newly redesigned website.

## LET'S HEAR IT FROM OUR DEPARTMENTS OF PEDIATRICS!

UAB faculty-co-founded Global Alliance for Prevention of Spina Bifida-Folate advocates for policy changes to decrease incidence of preventable neural tube defects



Jeffrey P. Blount, MD, MPH, FAAP

By Jeffrey P. Blount, MD, MPH, FAAP, Professor and Chief of Pediatric Neurosurgery at Children's of Alabama and the University of Alabama at Birmingham, and Anastasia Arynchyna-Smith, MPH, Clinical Research Manager at UAB

Advocacy to improve child health is an important pillar of UAB Pediatrics and we are happy to support efforts by our neurosurgical colleagues to reduce birth defects.



Anastasia Arynchyna-Smith, MPH

Global Alliance for Prevention of Spina Bifida-Folate (GAPSBIF) is a global partnership of neurosurgeons and colleagues who seek to use science-based advocacy to advocate, support and implement policy changes on national and global level to decrease the incidence of

pregnancies affected by preventable neural tube defects (NTD), such as spina bifida, through universal mandatory fortification of staple foods with folic acid (Vitamin B9).

Eligible vehicles for fortification include grains, salt, rice, corn, and tea. Rates of NTD typically drop from 20-150 per 10,000 to 5 per 10,000 following mandatory fortification. This alliance was co-founded by Jeffrey Blount, MD, FAAP, Professor and Chief of Pediatric Neurosurgery at Children's of Alabama and the University of Alabama at Birmingham, and Dr. Gail Rosseau, Professor of Neurosurgery at George Washington University, Barrow Neurologic Institute and Chair of Global Alliance for Surgical, Obstetric, Trauma and Anesthesia Care (G4 Alliance).

GAPSBIF has started an initiative that supports a resolution for mandatory fortification of staple foods at the World Health Assembly (WHA). A draft of the resolution was introduced at 75th WHA in Geneva, Switzerland in May 2022 by the GAPSBIF team on behalf of the World Federation of Neurological Societies. WHA requires that a resolution must be sponsored by a WHO-member nation. The health ministry of Colombia, led by GAPSBIF member and neurosurgeon Dr. Kemel Ghotme, has agreed to sponsor this resolution and garner support from other WHO-member nations.

Non-government agencies such as the Global Alliance

for Improved Nutrition, Micronutrient Forum, and International Federation for Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus are crucial contributors to the success of this effort. The resolution draft was approved at the WHO Executive Board meeting in January for consideration of a full vote of the WHA General Assembly in May 2023. This would be the first-ever WHO resolution fostered by the neurosurgical community and is potentially a successful example of science-based advocacy and diplomacy.



David Gremse, MD, FAAP

USA Pediatrics: Diversity Coalition showcases the documentary *Descendant*

By David Gremse, MD, FAAP, Chair, Department of Pediatrics, University of South Alabama

The Diversity Coalition of the USA Pediatric Residency Program hosted a group viewing of the Netflix documentary *Descendant* that included a panel discussion on celebrating the Africatown community's place in the history of Mobile. Special thanks to LaTasha Williams, the Pediatric Residency Coordinator at USA, for organizing the event.

The documentary relates the history of descendants of the ship *Clotilda* that brought 100 captive Africans to the shores of Mobile in 1860. The international slave trade was made illegal in the United States in 1808, so this human trafficking made the *Clotilda* the last slave ship in the US.

The documentary interviews residents of the Africatown community in Mobile who count the *Clotilda* survivors among their ancestors. The finding of the wreckage of the *Clotilda* revived the local lore surrounding it and allows the descendants to share their stories and honor their ancestors.

After the documentary viewing, a panel discussion was led by Franklin Trimm, MD, FAAP, Associate Dean for Diversity and Inclusion of the Frederick P. Whiddon College of Medicine at the University of South Alabama, and Karlos Finley, Executive Director of the Africatown Redevelopment Corporation.

In the discussion that followed, one of the most poignant comments was made by Myria Mack Williams, MD, FAAP, who remarked that the accounts shown in *Descendant* aligned with the oral history that her grandparents from Mobile passed down through the members of her family.

The Diversity Coalition sponsors activities to nurture a culture that allows diversity to thrive, and we benefit from their programs that value the unique life experiences, talents and attributes of all those involved that strengthen us to better serve our community.



# FLU & PNEU FACTS

Flu & Pneu Vaccines Reduce Illnesses, Doctor Visits,  
Hospitalizations, Missed Work & School.

## MAKE A STRONG VACCINE RECOMMENDATION

As a health care professional, your strong recommendation is a critical factor that affects whether your patients get an influenza (flu) and pneumococcal (pneu) vaccine. Follow up with each patient during all appointments to ensure the patient received a flu and pneu vaccine.

CDC suggests using the SHARE method to make a strong vaccine recommendation and provide important information to help patients make informed decisions about vaccinations:

**SHARE** the reasons why flu and pneu vaccines are right for the patient given his or her age, health status, lifestyle, occupation, or other risk factors.

**HIGHLIGHT** positive experiences with flu and pneu vaccines (personal or in your practice), to reinforce the benefits and strengthen confidence in vaccines.

**ADDRESS** patient questions and any concerns about the flu and pneu vaccines, including side effects, safety, and vaccine effectiveness in plain and understandable language.

**REMIND** patients that flu and pneu vaccines protect them and their loved ones from serious illness and complications.

**EXPLAIN** the potential costs of getting flu and pneumococcal disease, including serious health effects, time lost (such as missing work or family obligations), and financial costs.

## USE THE **S.H.A.R.E.** APPROACH TO FIGHTING FLU AND PNEUMONIA.

## Early Career Spotlight: Dr. Shaundra Blakemore is excited to be a pediatric emergency medicine physician at same children's hospital she volunteered in during high school

By Jennifer McCain, MD, FAAP, Chapter Area 3 Representative

This quarter's early career spotlight is on Shaundra Blakemore, MD, FAAP, a UAB pediatric emergency medicine physician practicing at Children's of Alabama (COA). As a native of Birmingham, she had the opportunity to volunteer at COA while a student at Ramsay High School and fondly recalls how this experience fueled her interest in a career in medicine and a desire to work there as a physician.

After graduating with a Bachelor of Science in biology from Yale University, Dr. Blakemore returned to Birmingham to attend medical school and complete her pediatric residency and pediatric emergency medicine fellowship at UAB. After fellowship in 2019, she joined the Division of Pediatric Emergency Medicine (PEM), where she has been a valuable member as well as a strong leader in UAB's medical school.

Passionate about teaching and engaging with students at all levels, Dr. Blakemore is a co-director of UAB's mini-medical school program, in which sixth- and seventh-graders from the local area interested in medical careers participate twice a month during the school year. At each meeting, students hear from medical team members about their career paths and have opportunities to have practical experience with lab experiments in STEM activities. She also serves as an ambassador for Yale University and enjoys interviewing prospective students and learning about their high school activities.

As a co-director of UAB's Learning Community, Dr. Blakemore also mentors and guides medical students longitudinally through their entire medical school career. Her learning community of approximately 60 students across each year of medical school meets with her formally to discuss topics such as wellness and personal development, health disparities, ethics, interprofessional teamwork and advocacy. She also meets with them informally—they recently enjoyed time with her and her family for a Valentine's celebration at her house.

In 2022, the Department of Pediatrics recognized Dr. Blakemore with an Achievement Award for her strong commitment to the career development of trainees and junior faculty. When discussing her contributions to PEM at UAB, Division Director Dr. Kathy Monroe said, "Shaundra is a rockstar and an exceptional clinician, mentor, teacher, and role model. She is quietly going about changing the world!"

In her free time, Dr. Blakemore enjoys spending time with her husband Sam and two daughters Charlotte (six years old) and Catherine (three years old). Dancing between busy shifts in the COA emergency department, mentoring medical students, and many family activities isn't enough for her--she also loves her tap dance classes in her free time!

It is one of the best treats for her colleagues to work alongside Dr. Blakemore in a busy, chaotic emergency department, where she serves her community with a joyful, humble, and compassionate heart. Families love her reassuring bedside manner; she brings calm amid the storm. She is determined to provide the highest level of care and vested in advocating for every child she meets. Her beautiful smile and kind spirit is present all hours of the day and night, and her infectious love for serving is a gift to all of her students, patients, and colleagues!



Shaundra Blakemore, MD, FAAP

## Update from the AL-AAP Practice Management Association

By Tonya Pitts, Chair, Practice Management Association, and Billing Coordinator, Fairhope Pediatrics

The Public Health Emergency that was declared three years ago at the beginning of the pandemic is nearing the end. The projected end date is May 11, 2023 according to President Joe Biden and the current administration. We anticipate seeing many changes to occur in healthcare in the coming months. Medical practices will need to prepare to start purchasing COVID vaccines once they transfer to the private market. Currently, we do not know the cost of vaccines, although Moderna and Pfizer have commented that they may raise the price as high as \$110-\$130 per vaccine. If they choose to increase the price over the approximate \$26 per vaccine currently being paid by the US Government, insurance carriers will need to reevaluate the current reimbursement rates. We as members of the AL-AAP will need to closely monitor this in the months to come.

Sources:

<https://cnb.cx/3kxx2uD>

<https://cnb.cx/41AG5fd>

## CHAPTER BRIEFS

## Two pediatricians receive Courage Awards



Morissa Ladinsky, MD, FAAP, and Hussein Abdullatif, MD, FAAP

Congratulations to Hussein Abdullatif, MD, FAAP, UAB Division of Pediatric Endocrinology and Diabetes, and Morissa Ladinsky, MD, FAAP, UAB Division of Academic General Pediatrics, for receiving National Center for Lesbian Rights Courage Awards. The awards were presented at the first in-person Champions for Justice Dinner since 2019. They were honored for their work with transgender youth in Alabama and the South and their advocacy and support for this vulnerable population. Congratulations!

## UAB faculty elected to AOA Honor Medical Society

Samantha Hill, MD, FAAP, UAB Division of Adolescent Medicine, Terry Wall, MD, FAAP, UAB Division of Academic General Pediatrics, and Stephenie Wallace, MD, FAAP, UAB Division of Adolescent Medicine, were elected to the Alpha Omega Alpha (AOA) Honor Medical Society. The AOA is a medical professional organization that recognizes and advocates for excellence in

scholarship and the highest ideals in the profession of medicine. Congratulations!

## Huls receives award for work in countering human trafficking

In January, Kara Huls, MD, FAAP, UAB Division of Emergency Medicine, received the inaugural Outstanding Victim Protection in Countering Human Trafficking Award by the Center for Countering Human Trafficking (CCHT) within the US Department of Homeland Security. The CCHT recognized her and other members of Birmingham's Counter-Trafficking Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) who work together to improve detection and care of trafficking survivors and increased accountability for perpetrators. Birmingham's MDT has been recognized as a national model for addressing child trafficking. Dr. Huls provides medical care to survivors of childhood sex trafficking at the Sunrise Clinic at Children's of Alabama and is a staunch advocate in this area. Well-deserved, Dr. Huls!



Kara Huls, MD, FAAP

## Chapter joins other organizations in fentanyl dangers awareness campaign

Every day, more than 150 people in the U.S. die from overdoses related to synthetic opioids like fentanyl . . . and many people still don't understand the dangers. Odds Are Alabama is a wake-up call for all Alabamians because, in fact, the chances are extremely great that any drug that doesn't come from a pharmacy or a physician is laced with fentanyl.

Odds Are Alabama is a year-long campaign spearheaded by several statewide organizations, including the Alabama Chapter-AAP, to put a spotlight on the prevalence and the dangers of the illicit use of fentanyl. The initiative will not only heighten awareness of its dangers, but will also share critical information regarding help for those with substance use disorders and information about medication that can reverse an overdose and strips to test drugs for fentanyl.

**Here are some quick facts:**

- A deadly dose of fentanyl is equivalent to a few grains of salt.
- Fentanyl is frequently added to other drugs like Xanax, Adderall and even marijuana to hook customers on the first dose and keep them coming back for more. Since it takes such a small dose of fentanyl to be deadly, just one improperly made joint or pill can take a life.
- Six out of 10 fentanyl-laced fake prescription pills tested in 2022 contained a potentially lethal dose of fentanyl.
- From January 2020 to January 2021, overdose deaths involving fentanyl in the U.S. rose nearly 56 percent.
- Fentanyl is everywhere in Alabama, and it's time to take action to protect its residents.

**What can you do to help:**

- Visit [www.OddsAreAlabama.com](http://www.OddsAreAlabama.com) for more information and follow the campaign on social media.
- Share this information with your patients and families, as well as those across all aspects of your life. The more people who know about the incredible dangers of fentanyl, the more opportunities there will be to save lives.

Campaign sponsors: Alabama Chapter-AAP, Alabama Department of Mental Health, Alabama Department of Public Health, Alabama Hospital Association, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama, Medical Association of the State of Alabama, Scout Branding Company, and VitAL Alabama.

6/10



60% OF FENTANYL-LACED  
FAKE PRESCRIPTION PILLS  
TESTED IN 2022 **CONTAINED**  
**A POTENTIALLY DEADLY DOSE**  
OF FENTANYL

ODDS  
/ ARE

## NEWS FROM PUBLIC HEALTH

### Update on monkeypox

*By Wes Stubblefield, MD, MPH, FAAP, District Medical Officer, Northern/Northeastern Districts, Alabama Department of Public Health, Morgan County Health Department*

In the *MMWR* published on January 3rd of this year, the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention reported a continued fall in the completed immunization series of children entering kindergarten. Unfortunately, we've seen similar trends in Alabama, particularly in our youngest children. Nationally, this decrease in rates has continued since the 2020-2021 school year. Although there are many reasons for undervaccination in this age group, it is very concerning that our historically high vaccination rates may be in danger. As you go about the important work of providing vaccinations for the sake of health, the Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH) urges you to take every opportunity to be diligent in monitoring for any missed doses during every encounter.

### Congenital syphilis diagnoses on the rise

Additionally, ADPH continues to see rising and record numbers of children diagnosed with congenital syphilis. ADPH will soon mandate that all women should be screened twice during pregnancy, adding a third trimester screening. Although this is still in process, please address this as leaders in our delivering hospitals and encourage our OB/GYN colleagues to begin screening now that the dominant insurers are paying for the service. Also, make plans to review the latest *Red Book* recommendations for diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up of exposed infants and look forward to an educational review session on this topic at the upcoming AL-AAP Spring Meeting.

### Many thanks to our advertisers

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Immunization Division

Alabama Parenting  
Assistance Line

Children's of Alabama

UAB Heersink School of  
Medicine

## Discovery happens here.

When physicians, scientists and researchers with extraordinary talent and passion are given the technology, the facilities, and the support, they achieve great things. The discoveries, innovations and clinical trials happening today will help shape the future of treatments and lead to cures. And it benefits not only the patients and families who come to Children's of Alabama, but people across the country and around the world for years to come.

**To learn about the more than 90 current clinical trials for childhood cancer and blood disorders, visit [ChildrensAL.org/cancer-clinical-trials](https://www.childrensal.org/cancer-clinical-trials).**



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# Alabama Chapter

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It's no secret that rural Alabama needs primary care doctors.  
Currently, 21% of the state's population live in medically underserved areas.

## Alabama Rural Medical Service Award Up to \$150,000 for three years practice in rural Alabama

The Alabama Rural Medical Service Award (**ARMSA**) awards primary care physicians (family medicine, internist, general pediatrics) **\$50,000** per year stipend for up to three years once they begin practice in a rural area of need. These communities include Bay Minette, Oneonta, Troy and Wetumpka, along with dozens of others.

Physicians interested in making a difference in the health of rural Alabama are invited to explore this program. Contact [ARMSA@uabmc.edu](mailto:ARMSA@uabmc.edu) for information.



ARMSA is administered by the Alabama Department of Public Health and supported by the Office for Family Health Education & Research of the UAB School of Medicine.