



The Alabama Pediatrician

First Quarter 2024

From the President Chapter enters Spring with positive developments for children



Nola Jean Ernest, MD, FAAP
Chapter President

As we welcome the arrival of Spring, I am thrilled to share some exciting updates from the Alabama Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics.

First and foremost, I am delighted to announce that I recently had the privilege of fulfilling a long-held dream of

mine by representing our Chapter at Children’s of Alabama. On February 22, I had the honor of delivering a Grand Rounds presentation, shedding light on how our Chapter tirelessly advocates for pediatricians and, most importantly, the well-being of our children. It was a momentous occasion, and I am grateful for the opportunity to showcase the incredible work we do.

In addition, I am pleased to report some positive developments emerging from the Alabama legislative session. While navigating the legislative landscape is always challenging, this year brings a glimmer of hope as we witness progress being made on strengthening our state’s child passenger safety law. These advancements are crucial steps toward ensuring the safety and protection of our youngest citizens, and I commend the efforts of the pediatricians and Chapter staff who have been involved in this important endeavor.

Similarly, our firearm injury prevention committee has been hard at work preparing educational sessions for our members and strategizing how we can best advocate with our communities as well as legislators.

Looking ahead, mark your calendars for an event that promises to be both enriching and enjoyable.

Last call: It’s not too late to register for Spring Meeting!

April 18-21, 2024, The Lodge at Gulf State Park

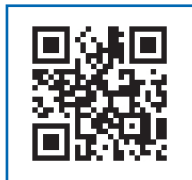
The Chapter executive office and our CME Chair Haidee Custodio, MD, FAAP, have developed a fantastic agenda for the 2024 Spring Meeting, which will offer 11.0 hours of quality pediatric CME AND MOC Part 2. Spring is in the air now, and what better way to enjoy warmer weather than at the beach—with colleagues!

Set for April 18-21, this year’s meeting will include the latest and most relevant clinical topics. Here is the line-up: Collaborative Care for Patients with Inflammatory Bowel Disease; A Teen Mental Health Workshop - Applying ACHIA Teen Mental Wellness Collaborative Lessons Learned to Your Practice; Navigating the Storm - Alabama Pediatric Disaster Tabletop; Enriching the Patient and Family Experience in Health Care - Applying an Equity Lens; Respiratory Syncytial Virus - New Weapons to Battle an Old Foe; 2024 Update on Vaccines; COACHES Outpatient - Ensuring Your Practice is Ready for the Next In-Office Emergency; Development of a Multidisciplinary Clinic Caring for Families Affected by Substance Use Disorder; Neonatal Drug Testing - When to Test, What Does the Test Really Tell You, How Do You Use the Information?; and Boosting Public Discourse - Evidence-Based Strategies for Reframing Child and Adolescent Vaccinations.

In addition, there will be two industry-sponsored symposia:
- Failure to Thrive, sponsored by Children’s of Alabama (Friday lunch)
- From Positive Newborn Screen to Clinical Care: The Role of the Pediatrician, sponsored by Sanofi (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 11th annual Grand Pediatric Pentathlon

Scan the QR code to get all of the information and to register!



continued on page 2

Chapter Office and Staff Alabama Chapter – AAP

- Linda P. Lee, APR
Executive Director
- Rachel Latham, M.Ed.
Project Coordinator
- Jill H. Powell
Meeting and Membership
Coordinator
- Amy S. Crosby,
ROR State Coordinator
- Salina T. Sowell
ROR Program/
Communications Coordinator

19 S. Jackson St.
Montgomery, AL 36104
(334) 954-2543
Toll-free (866) 293-4783
Fax: (334) 269-5200
llee@alaap.org
www.alaap.org

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

From April 18 to April 21, we will be gathering at the Lodge at Gulf State Park for our Spring Meeting. It's a time to foster connections, exchange ideas, and renew our commitment to advancing pediatric care across our great state - and, I hear there will be cake! I hope you will join us.

As we embark on this new season filled with promise and possibility, let us continue to work tirelessly in support of our shared mission: promoting the health and well-being of Alabama's children. Together, we can make a meaningful difference in the lives of those we serve.

2024 Legislative Session more than halfway through as AL-AAP advocates for child health priorities

At time of writing, the Regular Session of the Alabama Legislature has met 17 of the 30 required days of its 2024 Regular Session. The Alabama Chapter-AAP has already made great progress on its 2024 Legislative Agenda (see QR code for Legislative Advocacy page, which includes a link to the agenda).

On March 6, 25 Chapter members came to Montgomery for the Chapter's 20th Pediatric Legislative Day to learn about the legislative process and meet with their legislators on issues such as adequate Medicaid reimbursement to maintain/improve access for children, the importance of removing barriers to childhood immunizations, the importance of keeping children safe by improving our firearms laws, and full funding for the Alabama Department of Mental Health's crisis centers and other services.

Currently, the Chapter is watching and advocating against two bills that would create barriers to childhood vaccination: making "religious" exemptions easier, and requiring legal guardian consent for vaccines.

Meanwhile, however, one of our educational priorities has crossed the finish line in the Alabama House of Representatives: HB 245, which strengthens' Alabama's child passenger safety law to align it with national recommendations (see next page).



The Chapter celebrates Pediatric Legislative Day's 20th anniversary with a cake, flanked by current president Nola Jean Ernest, MD, PhD, FAAP, and 2003-2005 president Marsha Raulerson, MD, FAAP, who conceived of PLD during her presidency.



Residents and faculty from UAB Pediatrics descend upon the Alabama State House to meet with their state legislators during Legislative Day.

2024 legislative session continued from page 2**Child Passenger Safety law background & update**

Cassi Smola, MD, FAAP, addresses House Committee on Public Safety and Homeland Security

As you may be aware, Alabama's child passenger safety law was last updated in 2006, when the Chapter joined VOICES for Alabama's Children and other partners in their advocacy to successfully improve our law.

Last year at this time, the Chapter approached VOICES and Alabama Children First about revisiting our law to align it more closely with updated 2018 recommendations from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Although our small coalition's planned mini-educational session for a small group of lawmakers last year got cancelled due to the time crunch at the end of the legislative session, we resumed our work this year and

were able to reschedule it for March 6, to coincide with our Legislative Day. Since January, our team thoughtfully worked on the scripting and identified experts to deliver that messaging. Our goal was to "educate" this year, get feedback and then work toward legislation early next year.

In mid-February, however, we learned that a legislator, Rep. Ron Bolton, had been working with Children's of Alabama and Safe Kids Alabama on the specifics of a bill he planned to introduce this year. We joined forces with them, so our coalition grew rather quickly.

In late February, after we met with Rep. Bolton, both in person and via email, he introduced a model bill in early March that includes all of the latest recommendations. When asked where he got the idea to work on this, he said he was talking to a pediatrician (the Chapter's Area 5 representative, Shawn Cecil, MD, FAAP) in his neighborhood who suggested it!

Cassi Smola, MD, FAAP, a hospitalist at Children's of Alabama, provided testimony at the March 6 meeting of the House Transportation and Homeland Safety Committee, which, moments later, passed the bill unanimously. Then on March 19, the bill was read on the House floor, where it also passed with no amendments! Now, at time of writing, the bill moves to the Senate.

Please join your colleagues in responding to action alerts on this and other important bill votes when you receive them from the Chapter. Together, we can make a difference; it is already evident that we are!

M E D I C A I D N E W S & U P D A T E S**Chapter advocates to Medicaid Commissioner and legislators for increases in Medicaid reimbursement for pediatricians/primary care providers**

As you may be aware, the Alabama Chapter-AAP leadership meets regularly (three times a year) with payors (Blue Cross Blue Shield of Alabama, ALL Kids and Alabama Medicaid) through its Pediatric Council. We also meet quarterly with Medicaid Commissioner Stephanie Azar on relevant pediatric issues, including coverage and reimbursement.

In the last 18 months, we have educated our payors repeatedly about the impacts of inflation on our member practices across the state and advocated for solutions. Although we have had small wins, we continue to carry this flag for our members in order to hopefully see some notable gains in the very near future.

How to Contact Your Chapter Leaders

President
Nola Jean Ernest, MD, PhD, FAAP
Ph: (334) 308-1166
nola.ernest@gmail.com

Vice President/President-elect
Norma Mobley, MD, FAAP
Ph: (251) 342-8900
drmobley@mobilepeds.com

Secretary/Treasurer
Elizabeth Dawson, MD, FAAP
Ph: (334) 566-7600
enelso71@gmail.com

Immediate Past President
Katrina Skinner, MD, FAAP
Ph: (251) 928-5568
katrinaskinnermd@gmail.com

Area 1 Rep. (Huntsville)
Kym Middleton, MD, FAAP
Ph: (256) 265-4982
kymd27@gmail.com

Area 2 Rep. (Tuscaloosa)
Shawn Cecil, MD, FAAP
Ph: (334) 348-1304
spcecil@cchs.ua.edu

Area 3 Rep. (Birmingham)
Jennifer McCain, MD, FAAP
Ph: (205) 870-1273
jennifermccain@uabmc.edu

Area 4 Rep. (Opelika)
Brooke Haynes, MD, FAAP
Ph: (334) 749-8121
btbama@live.com

Area 5 Rep. (Montgomery)
Melissa McNally, MD, FAAP
Ph: (334) 272-1799
mcnallymd@yahoo.com

Area 6 Rep. (Mobile)
John McLendon, MD, FAAP
Ph: (205) 919-7583
jpmclendon@gmail.com

CME Chair
Haidee Custodio, MD, FAAP
Ph: (205) 434-3401
hcustodio@health.southalabama.edu

UAB Pediatric Residency
Program Rep.
Candice Dye, MD, FAAP
Ph: (205) 638-9585
cdye@uabmc.edu

USA Pediatric Residency
Program Rep.
LaDonna Crews, MD, FAAP
Ph: (251) 434-3917
lmcrews1@aol.com

continued on page 4

Many thanks to our advertisers

Alabama Public Health
Immunization Division

Children's of Alabama

UAB Heersink School of
Medicine

Chapter leadership focuses on firearms safety & injury/death prevention as strategic priority for 2024

February 29 webinar recording and resources available on Chapter website

In our 2023 Alabama Chapter-AAP (AL-AAP) survey, which is now conducted every three years, Chapter members clearly voiced firearm childhood injury/death prevention and safety as an issue the AL-AAP should work on now.

In the early fall 2023, Chapter President Nola Jean Ernest, MD, FAAP, “ran with it” and through her vision, an ad hoc firearms injury/death prevention committee was formed to begin this important work.

The committee developed two “tracks” of work: legislative education/advocacy and education of pediatricians and families.

Jennifer McCain, MD, FAAP, Chapter Area 3 representative and a pediatrician in the Emergency Department at Children's of Alabama, is championing this effort, and emphasized the importance of pediatricians talking to their families.

“We at Children's are currently doing a study to determine the attitudes and behaviors of some of our physicians about this issue; it is important that we start somewhere and break down the ‘discomfort’ of doing this in practice,” she said.

The Chapter has conducted two webinars thus far: one in October, laying out the scope of the problem in Alabama, and then a second one on February 29, during which members heard from two nationally recognized speakers secured by Dr. McCain to provide practical tips on talking to families.

That webinar was rounded out with brief advice from Dr. Ernest on how to begin to educate legislators on this issue.

Several legislators have joined the movement by introducing bills during this legislative session that aim to put parameters in place to keep children more safe. Although the likelihood of them passing is slim, the Chapter will continue to educate legislators on this issue.

Resources for legislative advocacy, along with how to talk to families, can be found on the Chapter's new firearms injury/death prevention resource page at <https://www.alaap.org/firearm-injurydeath-prevention-resources>. The recording of the two webinars can be found on the page.

Medicaid news & updates from page 3

As for Medicaid, we recently presented the Commissioner and her senior staff with our ideas for solutions to increase payment to Medicaid's primary care providers. This advocacy included distribution of a five-page “white paper,” penned by Michael Ramsey, MD, FAAP, a past president of the Chapter and chair of the Pediatric Council, who provided a number of solutions and made the dollars-and-cents case for the need for increases, using historical, inflation-adjusted rates to tell this story. The Medical Association and the Alabama Academy of Family Physicians have also supported this effort. In late February, the Commissioner let us know that they are running the numbers on these potential ideas for increases; we expect to hear from them on this in the next month and a half.

Meanwhile, Dr. Ramsey and other pediatricians shared the white paper with key legislators, including the chairs of the House Health and General Fund budget committees, in order to move this issue further. The Chapter will keep you updated on our progress as we continue to push this issue.

Update on impacts of Change Healthcare cybersecurity incident

Since news of the Change Healthcare cybersecurity incident broke in late February/early March, the Chapter office has tried to determine its impacts on pediatric practices in Alabama. Related to Medicaid, at time of writing, we are working with Alabama Medicaid leadership to explore the possibilities of interim payments to practices. The Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services issued a bulletin to state Medicaid agencies on March 15 that outlines new guidance permitting states to rapidly implement interim payments to fee-for-service Medicaid providers affected by the cybersecurity incident. Alabama Medicaid is now working to determine the extent of the impacts and finalize its review of this guidance.

Medicaid news & updates from page 4

Meanwhile, if your practice has been impacted, please read this information from the Agency:

If a provider uses a vendor/clearinghouse associated with Change Healthcare to send and/or receive 837/835 transactions, they will see payment delays. We are not receiving these transactions from CHC during the network outage, therefore claims are not being processed/paid. In the interim, providers may utilize the web portal or Provider Electronic Solution (PES) to submit claims and receive reimbursement.

The Change Healthcare service outage has affected the following (this includes batch and real-time submission as well as ACA transactions):

- Pharmacy POS claims
- Eligibility Transactions (270/271)
 - Claim Inquiry (276/277)
- Claim & Remittance (837/835)
- Functional Acknowledgement (999)

How do I get an 835 file instead of the PDF version of the RA that is available in the AL Medicaid Web Portal?

An electronic version of the EOP (835) is available in the Provider Electronic Solution (PES) software, but it is a process that will require updates from the provider.

An Electronic Remittance Advice (ERA) request must be signed and sent to the EMC Helpdesk. These requests are effective within 2 days of receipt and cannot be backdated. Requests received on or after a checkwrite will not include previous checkwrite data. Additionally, the provider must have a Trading Partner ID (typically this is the vendor ID for providers using CHC), to receive the 835 file via PES.

NOTE: PES only has the ability to download the file, it does not allow the user to view it. Therefore, if an electronic version of the 835 report is desired, the user must utilize an outside vendor program that has the capability to format the file into a report that is readable.

For assistance, providers may contact the Provider Representatives and/or the EMC Helpdesk at (800) 456-1245.

PCP Referrals Reminder

The Alabama Medicaid Agency no longer requires a Primary Care Physician (PCP) referral for services rendered for Medicaid recipients. However, Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment (EPSDT) referrals are required for EPSDT-related services. Refer to Appendix A of the Provider Billing Manual for more information regarding EPSDT. Recipients that are in lock-in will be required to obtain a lock-in referral from their lock-in provider. To verify a recipient's lock-in status and provider, you may view the recipient's eligibility verification via the Alabama Medicaid Interactive Secure Web Portal.

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).

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 involves providing 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.

First quarter 2024 update from the Chapter Mental Health Committee

By Shawn Cecil, MD, FAAP, Chair

In 2022, the Chapter conducted a Mental Health Survey assessing children's mental health needs. One big theme we heard from pediatricians was citing the need for timely sharing of notes between mental health specialists and primary care physicians. As a result of the quarterly meetings the Committee has with Alabama Department of Mental Health Commissioner Kim Boswell, she was able to help arrange a meeting in early February between us and the executive directors of the community mental health centers across the state. Historically, HIPAA has been given as a reason for why mental health notes are not shared. We reviewed the importance of timely sharing

continued on page 6

of notes and information regarding patient diagnosis, medication, and treatment, and that HIPAA states that only psychotherapy notes may not be shared with other healthcare professionals. In this process, we learned that regulations are in place by ADMH and the state in which there are extra securities beyond those listed by HIPAA regarding the sharing of patient mental health information. We are having ongoing conversations with ADMH about interpretations of these statements to allow for two-way communication between mental health providers and those involved in the care of the patient.

In the meantime, if you refer a patient to your local CMHC, be sure to verbalize to the family the importance of asking for records to be sent to the PCP office in order for optimal care to be provided.

Meanwhile, members of our committee have been very busy since our last update:

- Elizabeth Dawson, MD, FAAP, and the Alabama Child Health Improve Alliance team are doing a fantastic job on the current project focusing on trauma-informed care and resiliency.
- Marsha Raulerson, MD, FAAP, helped secure a grant obtaining funds from the opioid settlement to provide financial assistance for children in kinship care due to opioid use.
- Justin Schwartz, MD, FAAP, spoke at the Alabama Autism Conference on how physicians can make the diagnosis of autism in their clinical offices.

In addition, the PATHS (Pediatric Access to Telemental Health Services) program will be conducting its annual conference on Saturday, April 6. Madeleine Blancher, MD, FAAP, the Chapter's Suicide Prevention Ambassador and committee member, will be giving a talk on strategies for youth suicide prevention. I hope that you can attend!

Progress has been made, but there is still so much to do. We will continue to work together to better assist pediatricians and improve the mental health care of the children in Alabama. If you feel like there is a particular area of focus needed, please feel free to reach out to me at spcecil@ua.edu.



Shawn Cecil, MD, FAAP, right, meets with executive directors of community mental health centers across the state to advocate for better communication.

ACHIA practices improve teen depression care

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

The American Academy of Pediatrics declared a state of emergency regarding child and adolescent mental health in October 2021. With as many as 20 percent of teens diagnosed with a mental health disorder in any given year, the trend became worse based on preliminary pandemic data showing the proportion of adolescent suicide rising. Due to a severe shortage of child and adolescent psychiatrists (CAP) with most Alabama counties having no CAPs, pediatricians were given a unique opportunity to promote healthy social-emotional development of children and to prevent and address their mental health and substance use conditions.

As part of the 2023 Screening Effectively & Efficiently Now (SEEN): An ACHIA Teen Mental Wellness Quality Improvement Collaborative, 14 Alabama practices improved the following three key drivers surrounding teen depression care:

- Screening for teen depression at well-child visits for 12- to 18-year-olds



The Alabama Pediatrician Podcast continues to grow: 32 episodes and 1,000+ downloads and counting

The Alabama Pediatrician Podcast continues to grow in both content and listeners, thanks to the incredibly energetic hosts, John McLendon, MD, FAAP, and Kym Middleton, MD, FAAP, who engineer this important educational/informational touchpoint for our members.

Check out all of the episodes here--<https://www.buzzsprout.com/2176486/episodes>--click each episode to read the synopsis for more details. Here is a running list of episodes this far:

- 2024's First AL AAP Quarterly Update!
- News Interview Tips with News Anchor Margo Gray!
- Meet the National AAP President Elect, Dr. Sue Kressly!
- Celebrating National Black Women Physicians' Day!
- 2024 AL Legislative Updates
- The National Children's Advocacy Center
- Human Trafficking Awareness
- ACHIA and Relational Health with Dr. Cason Benton and Dr. Elizabeth Dawson
- Relational Health: Preventing Adverse Childhood Experiences and Childhood Toxic Stress
- Highlights from the AAP Experience: National Conference and Exhibition!
- Bronchiolitis Management and Updates With Dr. Mary Orr
- Enterovirus Update and Viral Testing with Dr. Benjamin Estrada
- Orthopedic Issues Related to Obesity
- Maternal Thyroid Disease and Its Effects on Newborns
- How Obesity Affects Orthopedic Health
- Updates in Neonatal Syphilis with Dr. Claudette Poole
- AL Public Health Updates with Dr. Stubblefield
- AAP Blueprint for Youth Suicide Prevention with Dr. Blancher
- 2023 AL AAP Fall/Annual Meeting Recap!
- PATHS: Meet the Case Coordinator and the Infant/Early Childhood Mental Health Consultant!
- Disaster Preparedness with Dr. Wes Stubblefield
- All About the AAP Annual Leadership Conference!
- Updates in Neonatal HIV with Dr. Claudette Poole
- Partnership for Children with Tish MacInnis
- 2023 AL AAP Member Survey Results Review
- 2022 AAP Practice Guideline Revision for Management of Hyperbilirubinemia with Dr. John McLendon
- Reach Out and Read with Amy Crosby and Salina Sowell
- PATHS: Project ECHO with Dr. Connie Chang and Dr. Grant Allen
- Spring Meeting Recap with Dr. Norma Mobley and Dr. Meagan Carpenter
- The End of the Public Health Emergency with Dr. Michael Ramsey and Executive Director Linda Lee
- PATHS Introduction with Dr. Marsha Raulerson and Susan Griffin
- Meet Nola Ernest, MD, FAAP, your Chapter President!



Alabama Pediatrician: Conversations & Information for Your Practice

Alabama Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics

Look for The Alabama Pediatrician Podcast on your favorite podcast directory, including Spotify, iTunes, Amazon and others. Let the hosts know of ideas for future episodes, or if you would like to join as a guest, by completing this short form: <https://www.alaap.org/submit-your-podcast-topic-ideas>.

Reach Out and Read All About It!

Reach Out and Read-Alabama Update

by Salina Sowell, Program and Communications Coordinator and Amy Crosby, Statewide Coordinator

As we enter a new year, we continue to connect with the families, providers, and communities we serve.

Working together, Reach Out and Read-Alabama is creating a system of care for families that focuses on the moments that matter and how these moments contribute to healthy development. This system is being developed in partnership with clinicians, funders, health systems, and donors.

“In every aspect of our work, we strive to ensure that all children have a solid foundation--cognitively, socially, physically, and emotionally—to ensure that they can achieve their full potential, with strong, resilient families to support them,” said Amy Crosby, statewide coordinator.

2023 Impact Report

Throughout 2023, we asked, “What happens if you give a child a book?” View our 2023 Impact Report at <https://www.roralabama.org/impactreport2023> to learn the answer.

Join us for the 11th annual Grand Pediatric Pentathlon

Over the last 10 years, the Grand Pediatric Pentathlon has raised \$150,000 for the program sites across the state. In our 11th year, the goal is to raise \$20,000 more while having fun participating in the events that have always been part of the pentathlon – biking, walking, kayaking, swimming, and, of course, reading. Back by popular demand, Sandcastle University classes will take place before and after the group fun run/walk on Friday afternoon. Participants can complete events throughout the day on Friday and Saturday to be eligible to win great prizes!

Those who register by March 28 will receive a discounted participation fee and a guaranteed event T-shirt.

We would like to thank the following businesses for their sponsorship of this year’s event – All About Books, Poarch Band of Creek Indians, Joe Piper, Inc., Medical Foundation of Alabama, My Care Alabama,

Children’s Rehabilitation Services, Fruit of the Loom, Alabama Association of Family Physicians, Dothan Pediatric Healthcare Network, Fair Advantage Consortium, Jackson Thornton, and River Bank & Trust. **Build a hopeful future together during Child Abuse Prevention Month**

Along with other Children’s Trust Fund grantees across Alabama, ROR-AL will work to raise awareness of Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention in April. We encourage our program sites to participate by hosting an awareness event in their practices. Some ideas for awareness events include creating a pinwheel garden, wearing blue, posting child abuse prevention information on their social media, and wearing pinwheel lapel pins. Please feel free to

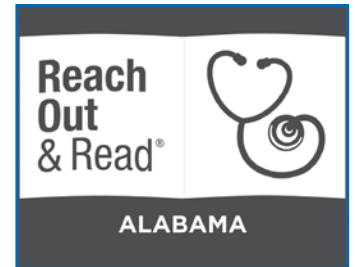
be creative! Please stop by the Reach Out and Read-Alabama exhibit at the Spring Meeting to pick up your pinwheel lapel pin and take a photo with our pinwheel garden. **Rx for Summer Reading celebrating 15 years in 2024!**

Over the last 15 years, our Rx for Summer Reading campaign has included a very hungry caterpillar, dancing barnyard animals, a big red dog in a storm, dinosaurs celebrating birthdays, a bunny visiting the doctor, a superhero kid, a sleepy tiger, a

camellia-wearing black bear, a toddler going for a well-child visit, a sunglasses-wearing cat, a worried young girl and a cookie-eating mouse! Visit our table at the Spring Meeting for the announcement of this year’s book, and sign up to participate in the celebration!

Program expands with six new sites

We are excited to welcome six practices to the program: Metro Pediatrics, Kids Clinic, Bibb Medical Center, Lamar Family Medicine,



Lindsay Miller, CRNP, medical consultant at Kids Clinic, LLC, opened her own clinic in Albertville in November 2023, and joined as a Reach Out and Read-Alabama program site in January.

Reach Out and Read continued from page 8

Regimen Pediatric Healthcare, and Troy Pediatric Clinic & Collegiate Health. These new sites will prescribe more than 7,800 books to the families they serve in the next year.

Reach Out and Read announces public policy agenda to strengthen public health, reduce systemic inequities

A new public policy agenda from Reach Out and Read focuses on strengthening health care for and early literacy in young children. The policy agenda advocates for young children and their families and recommends that policymakers and partners create and/or improve systems crucial to public health and early literacy, including widespread support of Reach Out and Read's transformative model.

Reach Out and Read's proven primary

health care model supports both early childhood development and fosters the bonds critical for the well-being of children, families, and communities. The policy agenda says the nation must address three social drivers that impact children starting at birth: persistent poverty, barriers to quality health care, and access to important educational opportunities.

Marsha Raulerson, MD, FAAP, Reach Out and Read-Alabama Medical Champion, shares what this policy agenda means for Alabama pediatricians and other primary care physicians who see children from birth to age 5.

"At those most important well-child visits, we can connect with families—providing guidance on how to establish positive relationships that support healthy development and mental health for a

lifetime," she said. "A free book that is age- and culturally appropriate can be shared at the beginning of the visit—a very positive way to start the encounter, a way to break down barriers, and a way to assess developmental skills."

"As a child, I loved having my own books that I read over and over again and took care of as my own," said Brittany Anderson, MD, Anderson Family Care Reach Out and Read-Alabama medical consultant. "There are several systemic barriers that limit children's ability to have new books of their own. ROR-AL helps to eliminate this barrier and this new policy agenda reduces these systemic inequities that negatively affect literacy, development, and overall health."

Read more on our blog at <https://www.roralabama.org/blog>.

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.



Children's
of Alabama®



LET'S HEAR IT FROM OUR DEPARTMENTS OF PEDIATRICS!

Child Abuse Pediatrics Division: An overview and position announcement



Mitch Cohen, MD, FAAP

By Mitch Cohen, MD, FAAP, Katharine Reynolds Ireland Chair of Pediatrics, University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Medicine; Physician in Chief, Children's of Alabama

The UAB Department of Pediatrics Child Abuse Pediatrics (CAP) Division was established in August 2015 and is the only CAP division in Alabama and one of the few in the Southeast. Michael Taylor, MD, FAAP, a board-certified child abuse pediatrician, is Division Director. Dr. Taylor and Elizabeth Schlappi, PNP, currently share the inpatient and Emergency Department consultation duties at Children's of Alabama (COA), averaging about 100 consults a year.

Michael Taylor, MD, FAAP

Outpatient consultations for all types of child maltreatment are seen at the CHIPS Center, located on the COA campus in Birmingham. The CAP Division via the CHIPS Center currently serves as the primary medical resource for 16 of the 35 child advocacy centers in Alabama.

The Pediatric Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (PSANE) program and the Sunrise Clinic are also part of the Division. The PSANE program, established in 2001, was the first PSANE program in Alabama and remains the largest. Kara Huls, MD, FAAP, is the medical director and Michelle Morris, RN, is the nurse director for the program, which provides medical care for pediatric acute sexual assault victims 24/7/365 days a year, serving about 300 children annually. For more information, see their website at <https://www.childrensal.org/SANE>.

The Sunrise Clinic was established by Dr. Huls in the COA ED and the CHIPS Center in 2021 as a multidisciplinary response to identify and respond to victims of human trafficking. The team includes representatives from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Alabama Department of Human Resources, Jefferson County Family Court, and local safe houses. Dr. Huls and Ashley Hodges, PhD, CRNP, are the medical providers for the clinic, which offers comprehensive support for victims, including STI testing and treatment, contraception, mental health screening, and referral to subspecialty services.

All CAP medical providers regularly communicate with DHR and law enforcement investigators, including courtroom testimony when needed in order to protect these vulnerable children and adolescents. We are extensively involved in educating investigators and frontline medical providers on how to recognize and evaluate

potential victims of child abuse, including in-person presentations and phone consultations. Mostly, the work of a child abuse pediatric provider involves working with children and adolescents to stop bad things from happening to them, so that these children can return to a loving home and grow up to be responsible, productive adults.

The UAB CAP Division is currently seeking to recruit a physician who is BC/BE in General Pediatrics with an interest in child abuse pediatrics for a full-time position at the assistant professor level. We will extensively train the new faculty member prior to their assuming clinical duties and we will continue to provide extensive support on an ongoing basis. This is a clinical position with some teaching responsibilities. There is also support for clinical research activity if the new faculty member has an interest. If you would like to have more information about this opportunity, please email Dr. Taylor at mitaylor@uabmc.edu.

To get more information about the job posting and/or to apply online, please visit: <https://uab.peopleadmin.com/postings/10150>.

USA Health Children's & Women's Hospital/USA Department of Pediatrics updates



Gul Dadlani, MD, FAAP

By Gul Dadlani, MD, FAAP, Chair, Department of Pediatrics, University of South Alabama

USA Health Children's & Women's Hospital opens new pediatric emergency center

USA Health Children's & Women's Hospital opened its new \$19 million pediatric emergency center in March, which is designed to provide specialized care for pediatric health emergencies. The new facility boasts state-of-the-art medical equipment and a team of dedicated healthcare professionals to ensure the highest quality of care for patients. The pediatric



ACHIA continued from page 6

- Documenting a follow-up care plan after a positive screening
- Following up with patients within 30 days of positive screenings

“Being part of the SEEN team and witnessing the insightful questions, peer-to-peer learning, and collaboration for improved care was a wonderful experience,” said Heather Austin, PhD, UAB Pediatrics, Division of Adolescent Medicine. “As a psychologist, it is wonderful to see primary care practices working to address our mental health crisis by providing screenings, brief counseling, and effective follow-up until adolescents can reach long-term solutions

for counseling as needed.”

View the Executive Summary and the Final Report for more information about how participating practices exceeded collaborative goals:

https://www.achia.org/images/ACHIA_SEEN_FinalReport_PP.pdf

Join us for “A Teen Mental Health Workshop: Applying ACHIA Teen Mental Wellness Collaborative Lessons Learned to Your Practice” presented by Heather Austin, PhD, and me at the AL-AAP Spring Meeting. You will practice and improve hands-on, brief interventions to address teen mental health concerns even during a busy teen visit.

Let’s Hear it from Our Departments of Pediatrics continued from page 10

emergency center will transform care delivery for our children and teens within the Gulf Coast community and beyond. It is staffed with specially trained pediatric emergency medicine physicians, advanced practice providers, nurses, respiratory therapists, and child life specialists, among others.

The newly expanded center features more than 30 treatment areas, including 25 private treatment rooms and specialized space for patients suffering from trauma, abuse and/or developmental and sensory issues. As part of the University of South Alabama, the pediatric ER records approximately 40,000 patient visits per year. Capacity is expected to increase with the addition of more treatment areas. The center is Alabama’s only emergency department certified to have 100 percent pediatric readiness as determined by the Alabama Department of Public Health.

USA advancing research in sickle cell disease

Sickle cell disease (SCD) is the most prevalent genetic hematological disorder worldwide and results in a morphological change to red blood cells. Attributable complications include pain, anemia, pulmonary and renal complications, and cerebrovascular accidents with reduced quality of life and overall life expectancy. The University of South Alabama Division of Pediatric Hematology/Oncology Sickle Cell Clinic is committed to improving the care of children living with SCD. The group recently began participation in a prospective multicenter registry called Globin Research Network for Data and Discovery (GRNDaD).

Data collection helps with patient-reported outcomes, including health-related quality of life tools. The project is supported by the EMBRACE HRSA grant. The center also takes part in Project ECHO (Extension for Community Healthcare Outcomes), a virtual multicenter platform entailing biweekly high-yield, case-based educational sessions following the “all teach, all learn” discussion model in which peer recommendations are encouraged. These endeavors are aimed at improving care of patients with SCD



via collaborative research efforts and improving the health of all patients in our state and beyond with sickle cell disease.

Community outreach events keep kids safe

During a recent car seat safety check held on February 14, instructors from Children’s & Women’s Hospital and colleagues from across the state inspected, removed, and then professionally installed dozens of seats for local parents. The free community outreach effort was held immediately following a training course at the hospital, led by parent educator Courtney Thomson, BSN-NIC, and members of USA Health’s nationally certified car seat tech team.

USA Health now has 33 employees who are certified to install car seats. The Department of Pediatrics makes car seat safety a priority because research shows that having an infant, toddler or booster seat correctly installed can lower the risk of serious injuries and death. Car seat use reduces the risk for injury in a crash by up to 82 percent for children, when compared with seat belt use alone, research shows. Team members from Children’s & Women’s Hospital and other divisions have been providing free car seat inspections to the public for more than a decade.

Event Calendar

April 10, 2024
AL-AAP Practice Management
Association Webinar:
"What Do We Mean By
Onboarding"
12:15 p.m.

April 18-21, 2024
2024 Spring Meeting &
Pediatric Update
The Lodge at Gulf State Park
Gulf Shores, AL

September 13-15, 2024
2024 Annual Meeting &
Fall Pediatric Update
Ross Bridge Resort
Birmingham, AL

May 1-5, 2025
2025 Spring Meeting &
Pediatric Update
The Lodge at Gulf State Park
Gulf Shores, AL

Update from the AL-AAP Practice Management Association

By Lisa Luter, Chair, Practice Management Association, and Office Manager at Fairhope Pediatrics

Our first webinar of the year, held in January, featured Andrea Lewis, President and Senior HR Consultant at Human Capital Services of Birmingham. In her talk "The Language of Appreciation in the Workplace: How it Connects to Retention," Andrea shared best practices to help with employee retention. Andrea is a very motivating speaker and we appreciated her time and talent. It seems employee retention is on most employers' radars. It's not just about the paycheck anymore. Offering great benefits, showing appreciation, and providing growth opportunities are vital. An employer with a stable team equals success. High turnover hurts productivity and morale. By valuing your employees, you build loyalty, foster innovation, and ensure long-term growth. Investing in your team and enhancing your benefits package are two vital components necessary for your business to thrive.

Please join us for the next informational webinar scheduled for April 10 at noon with speaker Sharon Fields, Senior Talent Acquisition Partner at NaphCare. Sharon will be speaking about onboarding new employees. We look forward to seeing you all then!

coding

**o
r
n
e
r**

Contributed by Lynn Abernathy Brown, CPC

Foreign Body Sensation Diagnosis codes

Effective 10/1/2023, ICD-10-CM diagnosis codes were added to report evaluation for foreign body sensation when no foreign body was found. These primary diagnosis codes could help support evaluation and management codes by indicating there was a symptom for the following:

| | |
|---------|---|
| H57.8A1 | Foreign body sensation, right eye |
| H57.8A3 | Foreign body sensation, left eye |
| H57.8A3 | Foreign body sensation, both eyes |
| H57.8A9 | Foreign body sensation, unspecified eye |
| R09.A1 | Foreign body sensation, nose |
| R09.A2 | Foreign body sensation, throat |
| R09.A9 | Foreign body sensation, other site |
| R09.A0 | Foreign body sensation, unspecified |

AAP coding webinars

Make sure you are updated on coding guidance! Visit <https://tinyurl.com/y9dc4zuj> for the latest American Academy of Pediatrics coding webinars.

DISCLAIMER: Children's of Alabama does not accept responsibility or liability for any adverse outcome from the advice of Lynn A. Brown, CPC, for any reason, including inaccuracy, opinion and analysis that might prove erroneous, or the misunderstanding or misapplication of extremely complex topics. Any statement made by Lynn A. Brown, CPC, does not imply payment guarantee by any payor discussed.

CPT copyright 2023 American Medical Association (AMA). All rights reserved. CPT is a registered trademark of the AMA.

Human Papillomavirus (HPV) Vaccination: Why, Who & When

WHY

The HPV Vaccine Protects Against Cancer

HPV is a common virus that can cause cancer. The HPV vaccine protects against infection with some HPV types that cause cancer.

EACH YEAR
IN THE U.S.

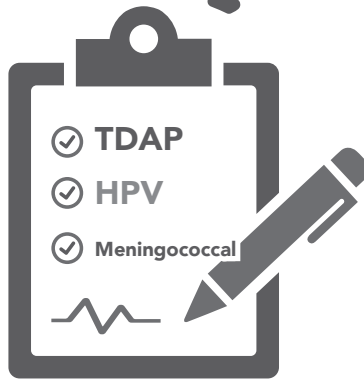


That's 1 Person
Every 15 Minutes
Each Day, Every Year.

WHO

Both Boys and Girls Need the HPV Vaccine

It protects against cancers caused by HPV.



WHEN

The HPV Vaccine Works Best at Age 11 or 12

The vaccine provides the most protection if given before a person becomes sexually active.



SAVE LIVES IMMUNIZE!

HPV VACCINATION IS COMMONLY GIVEN AT 11 OR 12 YEARS OF AGE,
BUT IT MAY BE GIVEN BEGINNING AT AGE 9 THROUGH AGE 26.

**GIVE THE GIFT OF IMMUNITY;
VACCINATE TO PROTECT YOUR CHILDREN AND THE COMMUNITY.**



www.alabamapublichealth.gov/imm

NEWS FROM PUBLIC HEALTH

Measles Update

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

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 58 measles cases have been reported by 17 jurisdictions as of March 14, 2024, including our neighboring states of Florida and Georgia. At this time, we have not had any cases in Alabama although it is reasonable to assume that it is only a matter of time. Many of those who are reading this (including the author) may not have seen a case of measles other than in pictures. Please review the resources below to refresh yourselves on the disease course of this incredibly contagious virus, including the characteristic rash. Remember, the rash may not be as evident in those with darker skin tones.

Although it is very important to consider measles in your differential diagnosis of children presenting with a cough, coryza, and conjunctivitis along with a rash, it is equally or more important to identify the epidemiologic factors that surround each suspect case. One easy way to think about this is a phrase that was used during the recent Ebola outbreak: Identify, Isolate, and Inform.

After identifying a person with a possible measles infection, isolate them immediately and perform a good history including vaccination status, contact with other suspected patients, travel to areas with known measles activity (U.S. or foreign areas), recent contacts, and the course of the illness (prodrome onset, rash onset, duration). All of this will be important for testing approval and in the subsequent case investigation. Finally, inform the Alabama Department Public Health (ADPH) immediately, even while the patient is still in the office (link is on the main ADPH measles page and is also directly linked below).

To properly diagnose measles, both a PCR obtained from the nose or throat and a serologic specimen are required after testing is approved by ADPH. It is therefore helpful to familiarize yourself on how to obtain and ship the proper specimens to the state's laboratory (also included on the ADPH measles page and directly linked below). Pictures obtained and submitted along with the notification form can help with the approval process and may even be submitted to the CDC to include with their future training resources (contact information and release form linked below).

In conjunction with ADPH, it will be important to provide vaccination and/or post-exposure prophylaxis to contacts who qualify. CDC data show that most of lab-confirmed cases are unvaccinated or undervaccinated for age, reiterating that the highly effective appropriate routine vaccination is crucial to reducing the number of cases in our state.

CDC main page: <https://www.cdc.gov/measles/cases-outbreaks.html>

ADPH main page: <https://www.alabamapublichealth.gov/immunization/measles.html>

AAP Red Book: <https://publications.aap.org/redbook/book/347/chapter/5753982>

CDC COCA: <https://emergency.cdc.gov/newsletters/coca/2024/012524.html>

ADPH testing information: <https://www.alabamapublichealth.gov/immunization/assets/measles-test-collect-ship.pdf>

ADPH notification site: <https://epiweb.adph.state.al.us/redcap/surveys/index.php?s=K494KKTAKC>

CDC contact: MeaslesReport@cdc.gov

Photo release PDF: https://alaap.org/s/Photo_Consent_Form-English-1.pdf

CHAPTER BRIEFS

Dawson honored among 2024 Women Who Shape the State



Elizabeth Dawson, MD, FAAP

Elizabeth Dawson, MD, FAAP, a pediatrician at Troy Pediatric Clinic & Collegiate Health and Secretary/Treasurer for the Alabama Chapter-AAP, has been honored by al.com as one of 25 “Women Who Shape the State.” In the announcement, the news organization wrote that these women are “breaking barriers in their industries while also working to help others to do the same in their own, inspiring future generations to see what dedication

to growth and a determination to create lasting change can accomplish.

“While their paths greatly vary from education to cyber security to business, philanthropy, medicine, communication and more, all of our 2024 honorees have in common a drive to see their actions have a powerful and positive impact on Alabama and its communities.”

For 15 years, Dr. Dawson has provided high-quality medical and mental health care to children in the Troy area, and is also the founder of the Troy Resiliency Project, which connects families of young children to mental health services, workforce development, foster and adoption care, parenting courses and support groups, trauma therapy and more. She has served on the Chapter’s board for 10 years.

Well-deserved, Dr. Dawson!

Smalley honored for decades of serving community



David Smalley, MD, FAAP

David Smalley, MD, FAAP, a long-time pediatrician in the Auburn-Opelika area, is one of six recipients of Auburn Mayor Ron Anders’s 2023 Lamplighter Awards. The award was presented during the mayor’s annual State of the City address. Dr. Smalley was recognized for his decades of service and contribution to the community as a pediatrician. Over his nearly 40-year career with Pediatric Clinic, LLC, he provided care and made an impact in the lives of countless children

throughout Lee and surrounding counties. As a member of East Alabama Health’s board of directors since 2006, he has also played a major role in growing the hospital system’s services to meet the needs of the community. In his retirement, Dr. Smalley continues to stay active and enjoys walking and biking with his wife as well as traveling with his children and grandchildren. Congratulations, Dr. Smalley!

Kimberlin appointed to National Sustainability Committee



David Kimberlin, MD, FAAP

David Kimberlin, MD, FAAP, professor in the UAB Division of Pediatric Infectious Diseases, was recently appointed to the United States National Sustainability Committee (NSC) for the Elimination of Measles, Rubella, and Congenital Rubella Syndrome (CRS).

The Committee’s primary objective is to certify whether the United States has fulfilled all requirements for the re-verification of the elimination of measles, rubella, and congenital rubella syndrome. Congratulations Dr. Kimberlin!

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 lee@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/3zfl60R>

Alabama Chapter

INCORPORATED IN ALABAMA

American Academy of Pediatrics

DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN®



19 S. Jackson St. • Montgomery, AL 36104

Presorted Std
U.S. Postage
PAID
Montgomery, AL
Permit #456

Answer the call to practice in rural Alabama



ARMSA

Earn \$50,000 a year!

The Alabama Rural Medical Service Award (ARMSA) incentivizes primary care physicians and NPs to practice in rural, medically-underserved areas in Alabama. Eligible PCPs receive \$50,000 a year and NPs receive \$30,000 a year for up to 3 years as a service loan payable by years of service. PCP and NP must not have practiced in the rural area within 3 years of October 1, 2023.

We're looking for NPs in family medicine and for physicians in the primary care fields of:

- family medicine
- general pediatrics
- internal medicine
- internal medicine/pediatrics

ARMSA is administered by the Alabama Office of Primary Care and Rural Health and is supported by the Office for Family Health Education & Research, UAB Marnix E. Heersink School of Medicine

For details visit <https://aohw.org/2022-armsa>
or email ARMSA@uabmc.edu

Apply for ARMSA today!

ALABAMA
PUBLIC
HEALTH