



# The Alabama Pediatrician

Third Quarter 2022

## From the President

Stay the course for the kids in your community



**Katrina Skinner, MD, FAAP**  
Chapter President

As I stare at this blank page, wondering what to write to you for this, my last president's column, a common refrain comes to mind – transitions. I am so thankful for the time I've spent as your president and I am excited for the road that lays ahead for our incoming president, Dr. Nola Ernest.

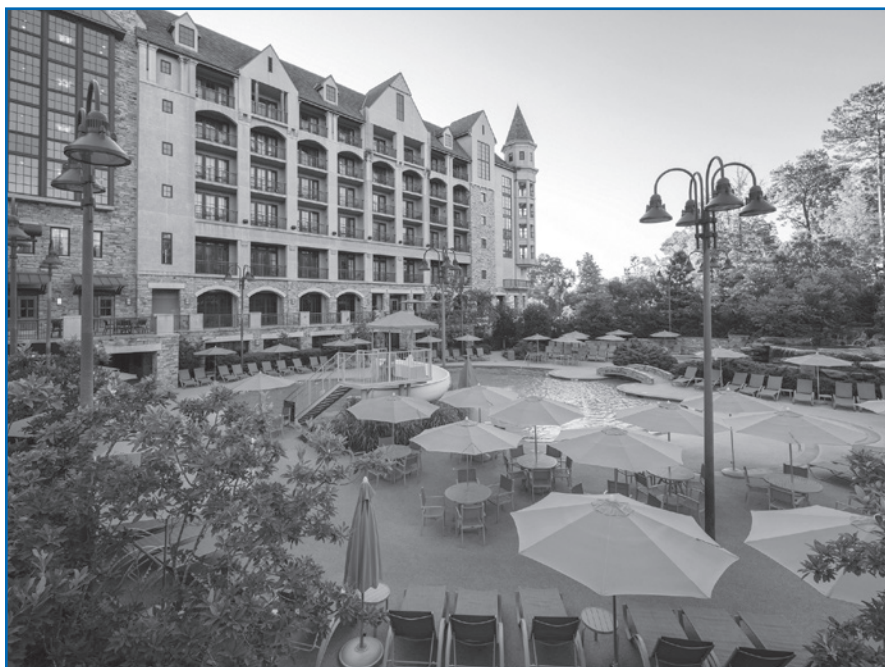
At this time of year, many of you also have transitions top of mind as kids are going back to school and our offices are getting busier. You may also be worrying about increased virus numbers as kids head back. I want to remind you: we've been here before. Continue to do what you do best – stay the course and do what's right for the kids in your community. Use your voice and your expertise to speak up and stand your ground.

We have come so far in the last two and a half years. I am so proud to stand with my fellow Alabama pediatricians in all the battles we have fought and will fight in the future. Continue to do your good work and your Chapter will be here with you as we move forward.

## LAST CALL: Register now for Chapter's 2022 Hybrid Annual Meeting – attend virtually or in person!

At time of writing, registrations for this year's Annual Meeting & Fall Pediatric Update are flowing in! It is not too late to register for the conference, which will be held both virtually (via Zoom) and in person at the Renaissance Birmingham Ross Bridge Resort on September 9-11, 2022! As usual, this year's meeting includes a Friday Practice Management Workshop for pediatricians and their staffs, as well as networking opportunities and fantastic clinical CME AND MOC Part 2 that will focus on mental health, chronic medical conditions, oral health and more!

For details on topics and to register now, visit the Chapter website at [alaap.org](http://alaap.org).



## Chapter advocacy results in increased access to CPAP machines for children who need them

Thanks to the efforts of several pediatrician members of the Alabama Chapter-AAP, including Chapter Vice President/President-Elect Nola Ernest, MD, PhD, FAAP, and David Lozano, MD, FAAP, pediatric pulmonologist with Dothan Pediatric Subspecialty Clinic, the Alabama Medicaid Agency has made significant policy changes to improve access to CPAP machines for children covered by Medicaid.

This summer, the pediatricians, along with members of the Alabama DME Association and Chapter staff, met with Medicaid leaders to discuss critical access issues related to pediatric positive airway pressure (PAP). One of the main points discussed is the national PAP shortage, resulting from supply issues, increasing costs and a recall from one of the major manufacturers. Meanwhile, Alabama Medicaid has had compliance requirements that have made it nearly impossible for the pediatric population to get access to machines in a timely manner.

As a result of this group's efforts, Medicaid made the decision to move forward with the group's recommendations for PAP in children. Those recommendations included:

### 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](mailto:llee@alaap.org)  
[www.alaap.org](http://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.

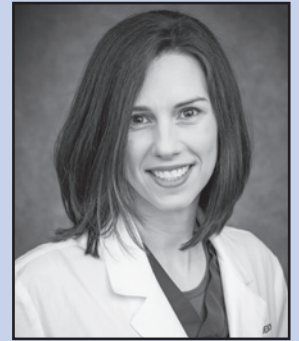
Children must have strong advocates for they have no voice of their own.

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.

## Meet Christine Campbell, MD, FAAP, AL-AAP's new Breastfeeding Champion!



It is fitting during August, National Breastfeeding Month, that the Alabama Chapter-AAP leadership announce that Christine Campbell, MD, FAAP, emergency medicine pediatrician at UAB Department of Pediatrics, has assumed the role of Breastfeeding Champion for the Chapter. In this position, Dr. Campbell will serve as a conduit between the AAP Section on Breastfeeding at the AAP and members of the Chapter in helping them engage with new mothers about the importance of breastfeeding.

Dr. Campbell is a native of Alabama and has been a pediatric emergency physician at Children's of Alabama for six years. Her academic focus is on patient safety and quality improvement. She is also passionate about breastfeeding and advocacy.

"I didn't learn much about breastfeeding in medical school or residency, especially the specifics that moms need to know about maintaining their supply. Most of what I know came from experience nursing my own three children or learning from Dr. MILK," she said.

"This might seem surprising, but I use that information every day in talking with families in the emergency department. We know that breast milk provides tremendous lasting benefits for moms and infants, and especially with the current formula shortage, it is essential that we provide all mothers the training and tools they need to successfully breastfeed if that is something they are interested in. I also think it is important for us to address the many opportunities for improvement in reducing disparities in breastfeeding, supporting breastfeeding medical trainees, and strengthening legal protections for lactating mothers."

Congratulations, Dr. Campbell, and we look forward to seeing the fruits of your work!

### Chapter advocacy results in increased access to CPAP machines for children who need them continued from page 1

- Remove the compliance requirement in the Medicaid criteria during the supply crisis. The Medicaid staff will re-evaluate in the future to determine if the Agency should return to the compliance requirements.
- Change the rental to purchase model to a "straight purchase" model during the supply crisis, which will also be later re-evaluated.
- Remind DME providers that for continuous PAP (CPAP), separate reimbursement is made for the humidifier and CPAP device.
- Remind DME providers that supplies can be billed separately for PAP.
- Update the Medicaid max unit schedule for PAP supplies to mirror Medicare's max unit schedule.

In essence, increase the allowable supplies per month to match Medicare's allowable amount. "A HUGE THANK YOU to everyone who participated and rallied on behalf of the children of the state of Alabama," said Kelli Littlejohn Newton, RPh, PharmD, who oversees Medicaid's DME program. "This is a huge win for the families that we collectively serve!"

The changes became effective August 1, 2022 and are detailed in the alert found here: <https://bit.ly/3w0PPB8>.

## Chapter domestic violence project blueprint (part 1) for pediatricians to be distributed at Annual Meeting

By Elizabeth Dawson, MD, FAAP, pediatrician, Charles Henderson Child Health Center and physician lead, Chapter Domestic Violence Project

Thanks to a small grant from the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Chapter has partnered with the Alabama Campaign Against Domestic Violence over the last four months to help link Chapter members to local domestic violence specialists so that referrals and services can be better provided for these families, thereby addressing one of the most prolific adverse childhood experiences.

The Chapter has now held three webinars on this topic (see titles and recording links below), and will be presenting learnings and tips for pediatricians at the September meeting, with a presentation by Kim Randell, MD, FAAP, of Children's Mercy Hospital in Kansas City, KS.

- *Supporting Domestic Violence Adult Survivors and their Children: Bridging the Gap between Healthcare & Service Providers* – <https://bit.ly/3NO7nH8>
- *Supporting Domestic Violence Adult Survivors and their Children: A Deeper Dive into Accessing Services for Families in Need* – <https://bit.ly/3MbrqD>
- *Supporting Foreign-Born Domestic Violence Adult Survivors and Their Children: Cultural Humility and Language Access* - <https://bit.ly/3MhMoeC>

One of the key take-aways for pediatricians is to follow the three-step CUES evidence-based intervention: 1) know the state's confidentiality laws and how to talk to a parent privately; 2) universally educate families to start the conversation on safe and healthy relationships; and 3) support the parent/caregiver if abuse is disclosed and know how to provide a warm hand-off to local domestic violence specialists who can help.

How to approach this in your office will be the focus of a blueprint for Chapter members that we launch at the Annual Meeting in September as part of Dr. Randell's talk on Friday! We will also make the blueprint available to all members after the conference.

Meanwhile, if you are interested in getting more involved in this project, please let Linda Lee know at [llee@alaap.org](mailto:llee@alaap.org).



Kim Randell, MD, FAAP

## Resources for new COVID vaccine approvals for children

This summer has been a busy time in the COVID vaccine world: as you know, the CDC signed off on the approval of the Pfizer vaccine for children from 6 months to 5 years of age, and the Moderna vaccine was authorized for children and adolescents aged 6 months to 17. ADPH Immunization Division is now taking orders for this age group and will also soon be getting the newly approved Novavax COVID vaccine for adults 18 years and older. Check out these updated links for more information and resources:

- **Pfizer COVID-19 Vaccine Formulations chart** - <https://bit.ly/3Qw0FHg>
- **Moderna EUA COVID-19 Vaccine Presentations chart/fact sheet** - <https://bit.ly/3zR93dM>
- **Chapter COVID Vaccine Uptake Toolkit for Members** (includes messaging for parents, recent article from David Kimberlin MD, FAAP on why COVID vaccination is important for children, etc.) - <https://bit.ly/3JFVwdq>
- **Chapter "4 Steps to Becoming a COVID Vaccine Provider"** - <https://bit.ly/3QnRUPo>
- **ADPH COVID-19 Vaccination Provider Support Page** - <https://bit.ly/3Qxq57j>

The doses, schedules, and booster availability differ by age, product, and status of their immune system (immunocompromised vs. not immunocompromised). The graphics available on the CDC's website are very helpful: <https://bit.ly/3AbeQfB>.

## How to Contact Your Chapter Leaders

President

Katrina Skinner, MD, FAAP  
Ph: (251) 928-5568  
[katski@bellsouth.net](mailto:katski@bellsouth.net)

Vice President/President-elect

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

Secretary/Treasurer

Elizabeth Dawson, MD, FAAP  
Ph: (334) 566-7600  
[nelso71@hotmail.com](mailto:nelso71@hotmail.com)

Immediate Past President

Wes Stubblefield, MD, MPH, FAAP  
Ph: (256) 764-9522  
[stubblefield.wes@gmail.com](mailto:stubblefield.wes@gmail.com)

Area 1 Rep. (Huntsville)

Kym Middleton, MD, FAAP  
Ph: (256) 265-4982  
[kymd27@gmail.com](mailto:kymd27@gmail.com)

Area 2 Rep. (Tuscaloosa)

Shawn Cecil, MD, FAAP  
Ph: (334) 348-1304  
[spcecil@cchs.ua.edu](mailto:spcecil@cchs.ua.edu)

Area 3 Rep. (Birmingham)

Jennifer McCain, MD, FAAP  
Ph: (205) 870-1273  
[jennifer.mccain@childrensal.org](mailto:jennifer.mccain@childrensal.org)

Area 4 Rep. (Sylacauga)

Leslie Sawyer, MD, FAAP  
Ph: (256) 208-0060  
[lsawyer@pathwayped.com](mailto:lsawyer@pathwayped.com)

Area 5 Rep. (Montgomery)

Melissa McNally, MD, FAAP  
Ph: (334) 272-1799  
[mcnallymd@yahoo.com](mailto:mcnallymd@yahoo.com)

Area 6 Rep. (Mobile)

Norma Mobley, MD, FAAP  
Ph: (251) 344-7044  
[drmobley@mobileped.com](mailto:drmobley@mobileped.com)

CME Chair

Haidee Custodio, MD, FAAP  
Ph: (205) 434-3401  
[hcustodio@health.southalabama.edu](mailto:hcustodio@health.southalabama.edu)

UAB Pediatric Residency

Program Rep.  
Cassi Smola, MD, FAAP  
Ph: (205) 638-9922  
[csmola@peds.uab.edu](mailto:csmola@peds.uab.edu)

USA Pediatric Residency

Program Rep.  
LaDonna Crews, MD, FAAP  
Ph: (251) 434-3917  
[lmcrews1@aol.com](mailto:lmcrews1@aol.com)

## NEWS FROM MEDICAID

### Medical Director position open

The Alabama Medicaid Agency, Montgomery Central Office, is seeking to fill a position of a Public Health Physician Director (40434). This position is responsible for providing clinical leadership and guidance to the Alabama Medicaid Agency in coordination with the Commissioner's Office. This highly advanced professional, administrative, and medical position involves providing guidance in medical-related services within the Agency. Work involves providing assistance to Agency officials in making determinations of level and quality of medical care provided to recipients by health care providers. Duties also include serving as medical consultant in the development and modification of health care policies and procedures, and the implementation of health care delivery systems statewide. Work is performed with a high degree of independent and professional judgment. This is a great opportunity for a physician who wants to provide clinical guidance in an office setting.

#### Competitive Benefits and Salary:

- Desirable work schedule
- 40 hour work week (typically Monday – Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.)
- Health insurance coverage (Medical, Dental and Vision)
- Paid time off (including state holidays, annual and sick time)

If you are interested in this position, call the Alabama Medicaid Agency at 334-242-5600 for more information by August 31, 2022.

## Physician Wellness: See and Be Seen

By Michael J. Ramsey, AAP District X Vice Chair & Past President, Alabama Chapter-AAP



Michael Ramsey, MD, FAAP

It's been a tough few years.

For most of us, the pandemic has brought one of the most challenging times in our careers. The physical demands of constantly protecting and monitoring our own health were layered on top of intellectual demands of maintaining a mastery of constantly changing information about COVID-19, its treatment, and its prevention. We have been called on to provide reassurance to our patients, families, and friends when we, ourselves, have been unsure and unsettled. In that spirit, I would like to say something to you that you cannot hear enough.

Thank you.

Thank you for wearing a mask and protective gear every day, sweating while taking care of sick children.

Thank you for taking time to explain why someone didn't meet guidelines for a COVID test at that time.

Thank you for pressing to obtain a COVID test when you felt it was important, but the family and patient did not.

Thank you for explaining over and over quarantine guidelines, interpreting every unique exposure situation, and being incredibly consistent.

Thank you for working with your staff to implement new protocols and procedures, and then revising them again and again as more information became available.

Thank you for making the hard decisions of bringing someone into the office or treating them at home.

Thank you for worrying over your practice's bottom line, trying to keep people employed when there were few patients to be seen.

Thank you for digging in and getting the work done when you were overwhelmed with the number of patients needing care during a surge in cases.

Thank you for your grace and resilience as friends, family, and partners got sick and you had to pick up extra duties at work and home.

Thank you for persevering, and for still being here.

An important part of preventing burnout is to recognize the mission of what we do when its implementation gets hard. We need to make sure that our colleagues feel seen and that they know that we understand what they are going through.

I know what you are thinking: "Of course they know – I'm going through it, too! Why do I need to say anything?" Even though we are going through the same challenges, there is immense power in verbalizing to others that their burdens are noted and appreciated. We desire to be seen, to be understood. No one understands more about what we have gone through than other pediatricians. We are uniquely able to know the depth of what our colleagues have experienced these past two years. Therefore, nothing can be more meaningful than to be appreciated by someone who truly understands.

I write this with humility, knowing that I have not done this nearly enough. My desire is to see and be seen, to know and be known. Taking care of children is difficult under the best of conditions, and you do it with unparalleled compassion and competence. As we shift into a new phase of this pandemic, may we take the time to help our colleagues who are struggling. In doing so, we also help ourselves.

Thank you for all you do every single day.

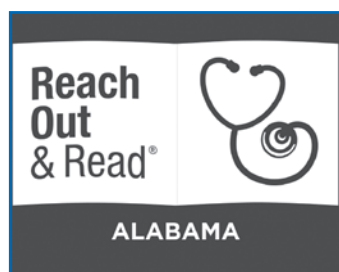
## Reach Out and Read All About It!

Reach Out and Read expands focus to early relational health

As Reach Out and Read looks to strengthen our efforts and expand our reach, it is clear that the need for urgent action to focus on the earliest development and health of children is being called out by many. Children thrive when a loving adult spends time with them; this is the underpinning of what's known as Early Relational Health. Research increasingly shows that having a strong, loving bond with an adult can even undo some of the harm created by adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)—experiences that include the negative impacts of poverty and racism, abuse, a divorce, or an illness in the family. The buffering effect of these loving relationships can create more resilient families and improve the health outcomes and well-being of children who face systemic barriers to their ability to thrive. By making Reach Out and Read a part of their practice, providers have a built-in strategy for working with families to strengthen that essential relationship.

The Robert Wood Johnson Culture of Health Blog states, “More kids than ever face the prospect of growing up less healthy and living shorter lives than their parents.” This prospect is one that ROR is eager to alter as we build upon our more than three decades of impact across the country and seek to strengthen early relational health for all children. This blog highlights some of the critical needs and efforts recommended to deepen the focus of health systems, policy leaders, funders, and non-profit organizations to make measurable progress advancing in this work.

Read more on the blog at <https://rwjf.ws/3SDm7vK>.



Spotlight on ROR-AL as the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading partnership celebrates one year

July 2022 marks one year since Governor Kay Ivey announced a new partnership that would assist Reach Out and Read-Alabama and its mission to integrate the principles of reading aloud into pediatric care by providing books and coaching to help families make reading a part of their daily routine. The partnership includes the Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education, Alabama Medicaid Agency and the Alabama Public Health.

In the last year, 24 practices and clinics in Jefferson, Macon, Marshall, Randolph and Monroe counties have participated in this program, providing 32,145 books to the children and families they serve.

Read more by scanning the QR code.

13th annual summer campaign focuses on emotional and mental wellness and encourages families to read together

What do you do when you have a worry? How do you handle your emotions and anxieties? Just as adults have worries, children have worries too. While a child's worries may not be how to pay the mortgage this month, their worries can seem just as stressful.



As many parents or caregivers struggle to handle their emotions and anxieties, how can they help their children manage their own worries? Through the 13th annual summer reading campaign, 40 Reach Out and Read-Alabama program sites helped families tackle their worries by prescribing the book, *Ruby Finds A Worry*, to their patients during their well-child visits.

The practices hosted events including celebrities reading to patients in the waiting room, fun arts and crafts activities, reading the story online, and more.

“When we talk about our emotions, we are better able to handle them. Filled with tips for families, *Ruby Finds A Worry* is an excellent book to start conversations about emotions in the home,” said Amy Crosby, Reach Out and Read-Alabama statewide coordinator. “In addition to helping families support positive social-emotional development, Reach Out and Read-Alabama providers also create a space where the families we serve foster healthy brain development and create strong bonds that last a lifetime.”

View more photos and videos at [roralabama.org/rx-for-summer-reading](http://roralabama.org/rx-for-summer-reading).



# Peanut Allergy Prevention Through Early Introduction

Over the last decade, research has led the way toward big shifts in recommendations about infant feeding to prevent peanut allergies. The early introduction of peanut foods has the potential to reduce healthcare costs, encourage consumption of affordable and accessible nutrient dense foods and reduce gaps in health equity in this country.

Through this online course, developed by the American Academy of Pediatrics, you will learn how to explain early peanut protein introduction to parents and how to prepare infant-friendly peanut-containing foods. The course will also help you effectively respond to common parental questions.

More resources for you and families available at [www.PreventPeanutAllergies.org](http://www.PreventPeanutAllergies.org)

Provided through support from America's Peanut Farmers

**Alabama**  
Peanut Producers Association

**National  
Peanut Board**



\*Continuing Education for Credit  
Now Available Free to You  
and Others Who Care for  
Families and Infants



## NEWS FROM PUBLIC HEALTH

### August is National Breastfeeding Month

August is National Breastfeeding Month! The Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH) will be releasing messaging to the public with education about the extensive benefits of breastfeeding. Additionally, we will provide concurrent safe sleep recommendations based on the American Academy of Pediatrics' updated safe sleep recommendations released in June of this year. As you continue to provide excellent information and recommendations to your patients about these topics, be sure to familiarize yourself with the AAP's policy statement (<https://bit.ly/3vRcjo9>). Hopefully, our messaging will prompt some new conversations in pediatric offices across the state.

### Monkeypox update

As monkeypox continues to spread in Alabama, ADPH is working closely with the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention and the Strategic National Stockpile to ensure that we have vaccine and treatment options that could be used in any pediatric exposures or cases. As a reminder, testing can be done through any participating authorized commercial laboratory or through ADPH's laboratory in Prattville. For more information, visit the page for healthcare professionals at <https://www.alabamapublichealth.gov/monkeypox/healthcare.html>.

### COA requests stool-testing for bacterial infection as part of STEC open-label study

Over the next five years, Children's of Alabama will be participating in an open-label study comparing two different treatment regimens to improve kidney outcomes for children diagnosed with shiga toxin-producing *E. coli* (STEC) infection. Although referring pediatricians will not be directly involved, Children's is asking for those taking care of children to test stools for bacterial infection and urgently send children with STEC infections to the Children's of Alabama Emergency Department, regardless of hydration status.

For urgent STEC-specific questions, ask for the HUS Study Coordinator on call to be paged. For non-urgent questions, contact Drs. Rachel Kassel ([rkassel@uabmc.edu](mailto:rkassel@uabmc.edu)) or Jennifer McCain ([jennifermccain@uabmc.edu](mailto:jennifermccain@uabmc.edu)).

## Event Calendar

September 9-11, 2022  
2022 Annual Meeting & Fall Pediatric Update (& the 2022 Practice Management Workshop)  
Birmingham, AL & via Zoom

October 7 - 11, 2022  
2022 AAP National Conference & Exhibition  
Anaheim, CA

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

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Alabama Public Health Immunization Division

Alabama Parenting Assistance Line

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ALL Kids

Children's of Alabama

Ready-Set-Go Gentle Parenting

## PATHS program partners with state agencies to expand training for mental health service coordinators in public schools

*Editor's Note: The PATHS program as well as the role of school-based mental health service coordinators will be a focus of a panel discussion on Saturday at the Chapter's 2022 Annual Meeting in September.*

The Alabama Department of Mental Health (ADMH) Office of Infant and Early Childhood Special Programs, the Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) and the Pediatric Access to Telemental Health Services Program of Children's of Alabama (PATHS) have partnered to train school system mental health service coordinators throughout the state on infant and early childhood mental health fundamentals.

"Identifying the impact of relationships on brain development, understanding the root causes of behavior, and learning effective strategies to work with students who may have experienced trauma, are crucial. The courses offered by the PATHS program and the ADMH Office of Infant and Early Childhood Special Programs will assist mental health service coordinators to better connect and serve students in our public schools," said ADMH Commissioner Kimberly Boswell.

Mental health service coordinators are appropriated by the Alabama Legislature to the Alabama State Department of Education. Their role is vital as additional mental health support, connecting students with school counselors, therapists and social workers, offering referrals and linkages to community services, and finding the right resources for children in need.

"Our goal is to ensure mental health service coordinators are available and trained to obtain key information that enables them to better equip districts with information and insight into student behaviors and provide appropriate and effective behavioral interventions," said Dr. Kay Warfield, Education Administrator with ALSDE's Prevention and Support Division. "Seamless support across agencies and organizations with a common focus of supporting students and families is key during these challenging times."

"Children's and PATHS are thrilled to have this partnership with ADMH and ALSDE. This training helps to fulfill our mission of providing mental health services to children/adolescents in Alabama's rural and often underserved communities," said Susan Griffin, LICSW, CHCQM, PATHS Project Manager.

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

### Addition of Dr. Argo to Allergy/Immunology Division prompts new food allergy treatment program

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



Mitch Cohen, MD, FAAP

As Alabama's only all pediatric allergy group, our team of physicians in the UAB Division of Pediatric Allergy and Clinical Immunology at Children's of Alabama collaborates to provide patient-oriented and family-centered care to the children of Alabama. Since 2003, we have grown from a division of only two physicians to five board-certified allergists, including two with primary training in both internal medicine and pediatrics.

We are now excited to announce the addition of our sixth pediatric allergist to the division. A Birmingham native, Dr. Sunena Argo has been passionate about food allergies since her early days of training in the field of allergy/immunology. In addition to her expertise in caring for children with asthma, eczema, and allergic rhinitis, she has nine years of experience focused on caring for food-allergic children. In the last few years, she has been responsible for expanding a food allergy treatment program for patients across Alabama and surrounding states. She has been actively involved in food allergy research studies, advisory boards, and the Food Allergy Support Team for providers who use oral immunotherapy as a treatment for food allergies.

Food allergy prevalence is increasing with current rates as high as five to 10 percent in children, and there is a large unmet need for its treatment. The only options available to most patients with potentially life-threatening food allergies are avoidance and carrying self-injectable epinephrine to treat accidental exposure. Oral immunotherapy (OIT) is a relatively new method to desensitize patients to their food allergen(s).

This desensitization treatment plan provides protection against severe reactions if the food allergen is accidentally ingested. Given the impact of food allergies on the quality of life of these children and their families, we are happy to announce the introduction of a new program for food allergy treatment at Children's of Alabama that will include OIT. With the FDA approval of Palforzia for treatment of peanut allergy, we are looking forward

to providing this and other treatment options for food allergy patients.

### USA Pediatrics: Spanish-Speaking Clinic addresses health disparities

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



David Gremse, MD, FAAP

Health inequities create barriers to achieving good health. Latinos who are monolingual in Spanish have been reported to experience worse health outcomes than those who are primarily English-speaking or bilingual in English and Spanish. Language access is undoubtedly a key factor among other possible factors

that affect health outcomes in this patient population.

One of these possible factors is "health literacy," which is defined as the ability to obtain, process, and understand basic health information and services needed to make appropriate health decisions. Cultural practices are especially important for Latino patients, because many Latino families have health care beliefs and practices that differ from those of traditional medical practice in the United States.

In many clinical settings, untrained interpreters, including family members and office staff, often take the place of trained professionals, which may lead to emotional difficulties and sometimes errors in communication. Better health outcomes can be achieved when physicians speak the same language as their patients.

It is these principles that led our pediatric residents and staff to create a Spanish-Speaking clinic within the USA Health General Pediatrics clinic. Patients who will benefit the most from this clinic are given appointments on days when there are Spanish-speaking providers and staff in attendance.

Our goal is to build a health experience that reflects the community to overcome barriers to care. All those involved in the clinic are working to identify health disparities that they can address to achieve better health outcomes for all children. The Spanish-Speaking Clinic is one example where achieving health equity is incorporated into the care we deliver, with a goal of helping the children and families we serve live healthier lives and to help make the health system work better for everyone.



Dr. Sunena Argo





## 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

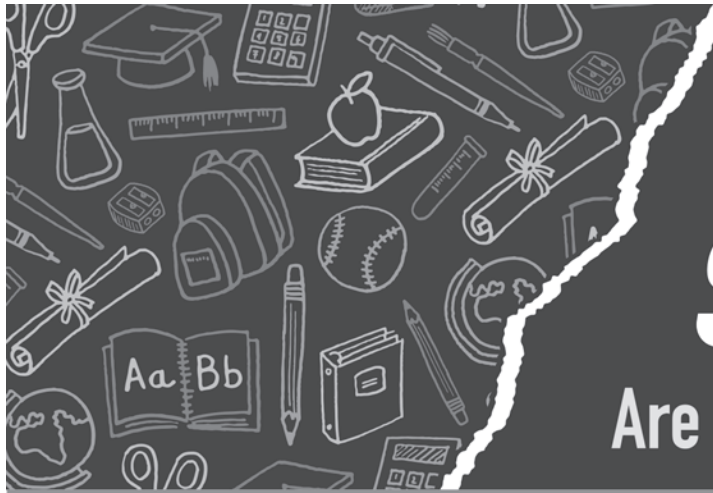
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Parenting Assistance Line

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# **BACK TO SCHOOL TIME**

## **Are Your Patients Protected?**

### ***Tools To Succeed***

#### **ImmPRINT**

**Immunization Patient Registry with  
Integrated Technology**

- Print public health approved Certificates of Immunization (COI) and medical exemption.
- View Vaccine Forecaster to ensure the best medical decisions.
- Run HL7 Vaccine and Error Reports and make correction ASAP.

#### **ImmPRINT Vaccine Coverage Rate Report**

- Run practice reports quarterly.
- Compare your practice to other state and county providers.
- See if quality improvement (QI) strategies are working.

### ***QI Strategies***

- Assess each patient's vaccine status using ImmPRINT Forecaster.
- Recommend all ACIP vaccines. Your strong recommendation is proven to be strongest indicator of vaccination.
- Send out recall/reminder via mail, email, or text to increase office visits.
- Schedule the next appointment before they leave current visit.
- Educate all staff about your immunization goals for your patients.

**For more information on ImmPRINT please visit [alabamapublichealth.gov/imm](http://alabamapublichealth.gov/imm)**



## Early Career Spotlight: Dr. Angela King loves building relationships with patients and families over time

By Kym Middleton, MD, FAAP, Chapter Area 1 Representative

I am so excited to introduce Area 1's early career physician spotlight, Angela King, MD, FAAP! She is a graduate of Samford University and the University of South Alabama with multiple honors, including the Alpha Omega Alpha Honor Society and Gold Humanism Honor Society. She then completed her pediatric residency at UAB in 2018, where she stayed on for an additional year as faculty in the newborn nursery and in the resident continuity clinic. She has since moved back to her hometown of Huntsville as a general pediatrician at Huntsville Pediatric Associates!

Her pediatric interests include vaccine education, breastfeeding medicine and support, and childhood obesity, and she states that her "favorite part about private practice is the privilege of caring for and building relationships with patients and families over time."

Her patients definitely love her and we are lucky to have her taking care of our community!

Dr. King's passions outside of pediatrics include her church and her family. She met her husband, who is a worship pastor at their church, in high school and they have three adorable children, three- and four-year old daughters and a five-month old son.

In her free time, she enjoys hiking and cooking, as well as entertaining others! Fun fact: she used to play the piano and flute, and sang alto in the Huntsville Community Children's Chorus!



Angela King, MD, FAAP

## Coding

### O r n e r

#### Blue Cross Blue Shield Fee Schedule Update: Telehealth audio-only codes

Effective October 1, 2022, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Alabama is updating its fees for the following audio-only telehealth evaluation and management (E/M) codes:

##### CPT Code Short Description

99441	Phone E/M phys/qhp 5-10 min
99442	Phone E/M phys/qhp 11-20 min
99443	Phone E/M phys/qhp 21-30 min

#### 2023 ICD-10 code additions and deletions Effective October 1, 2022

This is a pediatric-specific listing of some of the diagnosis codes that will be added or changed in October. For complete listing of 2023 ICD-10-CM codes and guidelines, go to: <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/icd/Comprehensive-Listing-of-ICD-10-CM-Files.htm>.

Certain conditions originating in the perinatal period

Delete:	P28.3	Primary sleep apnea of newborn
Add:	P28.30	Primary sleep apnea of newborn, unspecified
Add:	P28.31	Primary central sleep apnea of newborn
Add:	P28.32	Primary obstructive sleep apnea of newborn
Add:	P28.33	Primary mixed sleep apnea of newborn
Add:	P28.39	Other primary sleep apnea of newborn
Delete:	P28.4	Other apnea of newborn
Add:	P28.40	Unspecified apnea of newborn
Add:	P28.41	Central neonatal apnea of newborn
Add:	P28.42	Obstructive apnea of newborn
Add:	P28.43	Mixed neonatal apnea of newborn
Add:	P28.49	Other apnea of newborn

Factors influencing health status and contact with health services

Add:	Z59.82	Transportation insecurity
Add:	Z59.87	Financial insecurity
Add:	Z59.87	Material hardship
Add:	Z71.87	Encounter for pediatric-to-adult transition counseling
Add:	Z71.88	Encounter for counseling for socioeconomic factors
Add:	Z72.823	Risk of suffocation (smothering) under another while sleeping
Add:	Z87.61	Personal history of (corrected) necrotizing enterocolitis of newborn
Add:	Z87.68	Personal history of other (corrected) conditions arising in the perinatal period

## What can Alabama pediatricians do to address the teen mental health crisis?

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

### The problem: Youth in crisis

Last year the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) declared a state of emergency regarding child and adolescent mental health. As many as 20 percent of teens have a mental health disorder in any given year, and this trend seems to be getting worse based on preliminary pandemic data showing the proportion of adolescent suicide rising. There is a severe shortage of child and adolescent psychiatrists (CAP), with the majority of Alabama counties having no CAPs.

### Call to action: The role of the primary care physician (PCP)

The AAP's joint declaration calls for improving the policies and funding for children's mental health. As part of that effort, the AAP notes, "Pediatricians have unique opportunities and an increasing sense of responsibility to promote healthy social-emotional development of children and to prevent and address their mental health and substance use conditions." To meet our patients' needs, our pediatric mental health competencies should include the following:

1. Universal screening for teen depression and suicide
2. "Common Factors" communication skills
3. Early intervention for identified risks, including behavioral and pharmacologic treatments
4. A plan for emergency care
5. A reliable system for referrals and co-management for more complex conditions

### Improve provider competencies now

Since 2019, the Pediatric Access to Telemental Health Services (PATHS) program has focused on increasing the capacity for pediatric primary care providers

in Alabama's rural communities to diagnose, treat, and manage mild to moderate behavioral health conditions in children and adolescents.

More than 200 providers from rural counties are providing the following:

- behavioral health case consultation and provider educational programs using the Project ECHO model;
- care coordination for complex conditions;
- referrals where available; and
- behavioral health services via telemedicine between a patient in a primary care office and a PATHS behavioral health professional at Children's of Alabama when specialist intervention is needed.

To learn more about PATHS and if you are eligible to enroll, visit the PATHS website (<https://bit.ly/3zNzf95>). The PATHS team is actively exploring avenues to make the program available for practices in all settings.

### Enroll in Teen Depression Screen and Follow-Up Quality Improvement (QI) Collaborative

To address the mental health crisis, not only do we need to know what to do, but we also need to know how to have office systems in place to deliver this care. The Alabama Child Health Improvement Alliance (ACHIA) is enrolling for the nine-month *SEEN* (*Screening Effectively and Efficiently Now*): *A Teen Depression Screening and Follow-*

### Practice Workflows

How can practice identify teens eligible for screens?

Who administers screen?

How to have screen completed confidentially by patient?

Who scores screen?

Who documents plan?

Where is plan documented?

What is our mental health emergency plan?

What are our community resources?

Do we have relevant patient education materials on hand?

Who tracks whether patients at risk follow up in 30 days?

up QI Collaborative, which is set to begin in December 2022. Participating practices will hone office workflows for depression screening and follow-up. SEEN participants identify a core team within the practice who will test improvements around screening and follow-up, submit monthly data, and participate in monthly ACHIA "All Teach, All Learn" webinars.

The PATHS program is partnering with the ACHIA SEEN Collaborative by allocating five Project ECHO sessions to enhance our professional competencies around assessing and managing teen depression. Pediatricians seeking 25 credits for Maintenance of Certification Part 4 will participate in these webinars even if their practice is not currently eligible to be in the full PATHS program.

To enroll or for more information, contact Rachel Latham [rlatham@alaap.org](mailto:rlatham@alaap.org) or visit [www.ACHIA.org](http://www.ACHIA.org).



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QI Collaborative

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## CHAPTER BRIEFS

## Middleton voted Best Pediatrics Attending



Kym Middleton, MD, FAAP

Kym Middleton, MD, FAAP, Area 1 Representative on the Alabama Chapter-AAP, has been voted Best Pediatrics Attending by the UAB Huntsville Family Medicine Residents for 2022. Congratulations, Dr. Middleton! Way to go!

## Ambalavanan appointed to AAP Committee on Fetus and Newborn



Namasivayam Ambalavanan, MD, FAAP

Namasivayam Ambalavanan MD, FAAP, professor in the UAB Division of Neonatology, has been appointed to the American Academy of Pediatrics' (AAP) Committee on Fetus and Newborn.

As an appointed member of an AAP National Committee, Dr. Ambalavanan will serve a six-year term, contingent on-board reappointment every two years. Congratulations, Dr. Ambalavanan!

## CaJacob named to Epic Steering Board



Nick CaJacob, MD, FAAP

Nick CaJacob, MD, FAAP, assistant professor in the UAB Division of Pediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition, has been named to the Epic Pediatric Gastroenterology Specialty Steering Board. He will serve a three-year term starting in July 2022.

The Board defines the gold standard for electronic health records (EHR) use in pediatric gastroenterology with the aim of improved quality of care and productivity.

Kudos, Dr. CaJacob!

## Samuy honored with 2022 Med-Peds Impact Award



Nichole Samuy, MD, FAAP

Congratulations to Nichole Samuy, MD, FAAP, associate professor in the UAB Division of Pediatric Hospital Medicine, on being named the 2022 Med-Peds Impact Award recipient for her excellence in coordination of patient care, dedication to resident education, and mentoring.

## Two-year old STEP program helps patients transition from pediatric care

A collaboration between Children's of Alabama and the University of Alabama at Birmingham to help adolescent patients with chronic and complex childhood medical conditions transition to adult health care is proving to be extremely successful.

Located in the Whitaker Clinic at UAB Hospital, the Staging Transition for Every Patient (STEP) Program opened in September 2020 and has transitioned more than 300 patients over the age of 18 from all across Alabama into adult health care. STEP consists of:

- individualized transition plans (ITP) for adolescent patients with complex and chronic health care needs currently treated at Children's; and
- a primary care clinic that serves as an adult medical home to facilitate referrals to specialists, ensuring timely, uninterrupted transition and access to other support services including physical therapy, social work, nutrition and emergency planning.

"Children diagnosed with chronic conditions often need to continue managing these diseases into adulthood," said Carlie Stein, MD, assistant professor of internal medicine in the Department of Medicine and medical director of the program. "Many of these conditions, such as cystic fibrosis, spina bifida, cerebral palsy, were historically associated with shortened lifespans, but now these patients have increased life expectancy due to treatment advances. Therefore, we have seen an increasing need to develop adult health care specialty clinics."

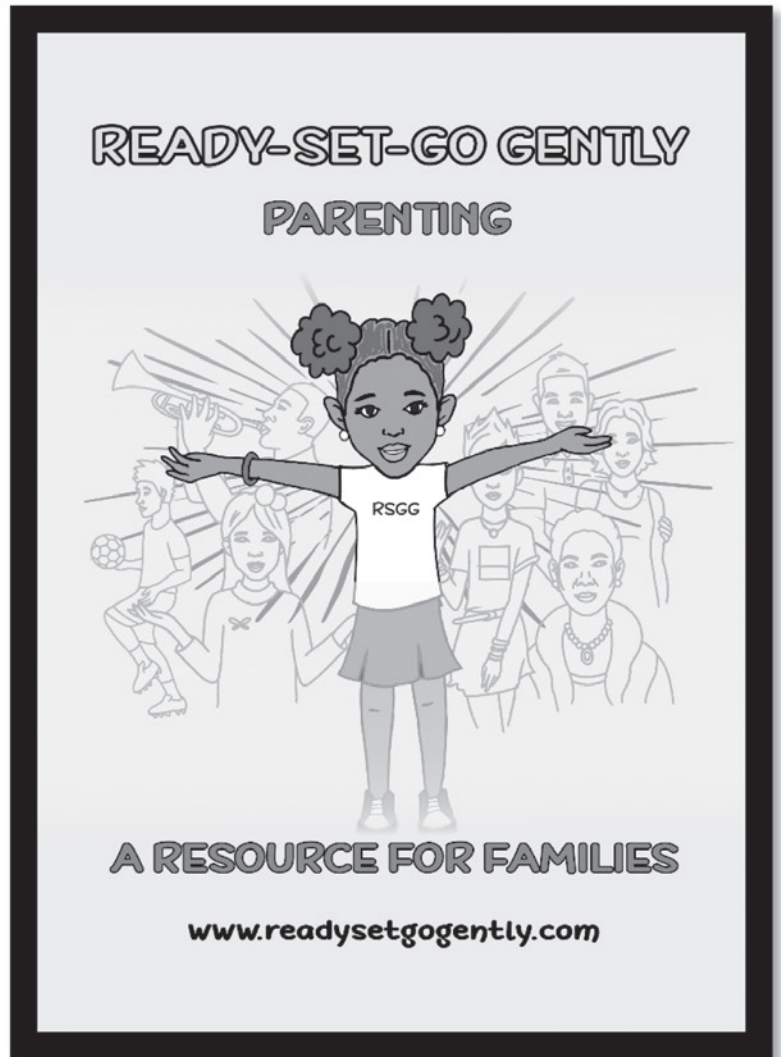
The program helps patients make the transition to an adult care model, including the transfer of responsibility for health decisions from the parent or caregiver to the individual.

"We encourage patients to practice skills to take responsibility for their own health — how to make appointments, how to get their medications from the pharmacy — as a way to foster their independence as become adults," said Betsy Hopson, program director.

Patients can get a referral to the STEP Program from their Children's specialist or their pediatrician. Patients with a complex or chronic disease of childhood and at least 18 years old can call the UAB Primary Care Access Center to schedule a new patient appointment with the STEP Clinic at 205-801-7474. To receive more information about the ITP or to obtain tools about how to begin transition planning, call Betsy Hopson at 205-638-5281.

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