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COVID-19

Local Payer Updates

Update #13 from the NYS AAP - Chapter 2 & 3

PEDIATRIC COUNCIL

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

Dear NYS AAP - Chapter 3 Member,

While it has been a number of months since the last Update from the Pediatric Council of NYS AAP Chapters 2 & 3, there are some new issues which pediatricians need to be aware about.

COVID-19 Vaccines

At this time, three COVID-19 vaccines are available to be administered to eligible New Yorkers, manufactured by Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna and Johnson and Johnson, respectively. All have been released under an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA), which permits their use but does not constitute full FDA approval. Only the Pfizer vaccine is available for use in adolescents under the age of 16 years, and as young as 12 years. Vaccines are available to pediatricians and other physicians and healthcare providers through the NYSIIS and NYCIR ordering systems. In order to be able to immunize your patients, AS WELL AS YOURSELVES, YOUR STAFF, AND OTHERS IN THE COMMUNITY, It is critical that every pediatrician who wishes to administer any COVID-19 vaccine in New York State be registered with the appropriate registry, and be in compliance with all the regulations pertaining to ordering, storing and administering these vaccines. If you are not currently registered, you must contact the appropriate agency to complete your registration.

Any provider in NYS may immunize any eligible individual (while following all NYS and CDC guidance for vaccine storage and handling.) You may bill any insurer for the vaccine administration ONLY (not the vaccine product since it is provided at no cost). If you are already a Medicare provider, you may bill Medicare for the administration fee for Medicare recipients; if you are NOT yet a Medicare provider, temporary Medicare registration is available—more information here: <https://www.cms.gov/files/document/provider-enrollment-relief-faqs-covid-19.pdf>

It is likely that approval for the administration of one or more COVID-19 vaccines to children younger than 12 years of age will be forthcoming in the near future, and this will be a critical

step in assuring the safety of these younger children as they return to school during the fall. It is important to remember that parents consider their pediatrician as the most important source of information concerning their children's health, including vaccines (Opel DJ, Heritage J, Taylor JA, et al. The architecture of provider-parent vaccine discussions at health supervision visits. *Pediatrics*. 2013;132(6):1037–1046) and that this trust can be a strong force in convincing parents of the critical need to assure vaccination of every eligible individual. The AAP Clinical Report entitled "Countering Vaccine Hesitancy" (Edwards, KM, Hackell, JM. Countering Vaccine Hesitancy. *Pediatrics*. 2016;138(3): E1-E14: E20162146) provides guidance on addressing parents who may be hesitant about vaccines.

Payment Issues for COVID Testing and Vaccine Administration

CMS has set guidelines for Medicare payment for COVID-19 PCR testing at \$51.31 and for administration of each dose of the COVID-19 vaccine at \$40. While these rates technically apply only to Medicare, most private insurers and NYS Medicaid Managed Care plans have also adopted these fees. Notably, however, MVP Medicaid and all United Healthcare plans are paying below these amounts, sometimes significantly below the costs of the testing materials. The AAP's Payer Advocacy Advisory Committee (PAAC) has been addressing this with United Healthcare, and at this time, physicians are able to appeal payments which are below the cost of acquisition of the PCR testing materials. We have no data about the success of these appeals as yet. However, it is critically important that all physicians review their EOBs to determine whether the payments they are receiving are below their cost, and, if so, file an appeal.

The process (shared by the AWESOME AAP PAAC staff) for this appeal is as follows: ****THIS INFORMATION APPLIES IF YOU HAVE BEEN PAID UNDER COST FOR THE COVID-19 TEST BY UNITEDHEALTHCARE****

The AAP has been aware and working for some time with UHC on the issue of underpayments for some COVID-19 labs. As a result, if you have been underpaid, UHC is willing to reimburse you at 100% of the CMS rate for some COVID-19 test codes, retroactive to 1/1/2021. Note that invoices may be required to receive increased payment.

If you have been paid under cost for COVID-19 testing by UnitedHealthcare, contact UnitedHealthcare at covidpediatrictest@uhc.com or by calling 866-229-2921 to request increased payment on these labs.

In addition, the AAP Coding and Payer Advocacy Staff (aapcodinghotline@aap.org) asks that you please take a moment to **[fill out a Jotform survey HERE](#)** so we can better track the level of impact. Even if you have already contacted UHC, they would appreciate hearing from you. Thank you so much for your time!

Payment issues for COVID-19 vaccine administration codes are being addressed separately by PAAC and the AAP. If you are providing the vaccine, it is a good idea NOW to review your EOBs, and to pull and copy any which are paying less than the CMS level of \$40/dose. We will likely have further information on addressing these underpayments in the future.

Payment for Telehealth Services

Most payers have eliminated the eased restrictions which were implemented at the onset of the pandemic. If you provide telehealth services, please keep tabs on your payments by reviewing your EOBs, and note any changes in payment levels that may be occurring. These can be brought to our attention, as well as that of PAAC, by filing a Hassle Factor Form.

If you have additional information to share, please reach out to your Pediatric Council, and we will make the information available to all Chapter members.

With our best wishes,

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Useful Info from the National AAP

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

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

The AAP Coding Hotline is available to answer coding questions via email at

aapcodinghotline@aap.org. In addition, a recording of a webinar on Coding During the

COVID-19 Pandemic is available for viewing [here](#).

The NYS AAP - CHAPTER 3 is YOUR Local AAP Chapter

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

Your Chapter, the NYS AAP - Chapter 3, has over 1,700 members in 8 counties: Manhattan, the Bronx, Staten Island, Westchester, Rockland, Putnam, Orange and Dutchess.

To learn more about Chapter 3, please view our [Member Value Flyer](#), which describes the value of Chapter membership.

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

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New York State American Academy of Pediatrics (NYS AAP) - Chapter 3

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