



Vaccine Advocacy Snapshot



Vaccines are safe, effective and save lives. The Academy has long supported vaccines as one of the most effective medical advances of our time. Pediatricians face increasing challenges in conducting this life-saving work, including inappropriate payment, vaccine hesitancy, and administrative burdens.

The AAP is advocating to address these challenges at the community, state and federal levels, to parents and to policymakers, to make sure as many children as possible are immunized. Below is a snapshot of our ongoing vaccine advocacy work.

Achieving Appropriate Vaccine Payment for Pediatric Practices

Pediatric practices are the public health infrastructure for the nation's childhood immunization program, and yet, payment to pediatric practices for the time spent administering vaccines, including time spent counseling families and providing multi-component vaccines, may be inconsistent or inadequate.

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) continues to significantly undervalue CPT code 90460, despite the recommendations of the AAP, the RVS Update Committee, and others. In addition, CMS interpretation of the Vaccines for Children (VFC) statute disallows use of CPT code 90461 for multi-component vaccines. Addressing payment issues with codes 90460 and 90461 are top advocacy priorities for the AAP. The AAP's strategy for addressing these issues includes senior level engagement with Administration officials and advocating to Congress for legislative remedies, as needed.

The AAP also continues to advocate strongly for parity between Medicare and Medicaid payment rates for vaccine administration and other codes, as well as appropriate payment by all payers for vaccines and their administration.

Countering Anti-Vaccine Misinformation Online

Research has shown the power of social networks to influence parents' decisions and behavior. As vaccine misinformation proliferated online in the wake of measles outbreaks, the AAP recently called on Google, Facebook and Pinterest to elevate accurate information on immunizations on their platforms. As a result, the Academy is partnering with Pinterest to ensure that users who search for information about vaccines or vaccine-preventable diseases will only see information from public health organizations like the AAP, WHO, and CDC.

The AAP also provides resources and support to pediatrician members who themselves have been victims of online and offline harassment for supporting vaccines. Nine out of ten families follow vaccine guidelines and recommendations for their children, but those who don't are a minority offline and can be disproportionately vocal online. The AAP is working to equip pediatricians with the tools they need to engage on social media and talk to their patients and families about vaccines effectively.

Supporting School Immunization Requirements

All 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico require proof of immunization for childcare and school attendance. While the AAP supports appropriately implemented medical exemptions to specific immunization requirements, the Academy opposes nonmedical exemptions to specific immunization requirements because it leads to lower immunization rates and increases the risk of spreading dangerous vaccine-preventable diseases. AAP chapters have been active in advancing bills in state legislatures to remove nonmedical exemptions from school entry requirements in order to better protect their communities.

Increasing Vaccine Access and Coverage

The AAP is working to ensure that all children have health care coverage, including for vaccines. Recent increases in child uninsurance rates are alarming. The chilling effect of immigration policies, cuts in outreach and enrollment, and harmful state policy changes are eroding coverage, and we know that lack of access to insurance coverage is a barrier to children being vaccinated on time. The AAP and its chapters are engaging in concerted efforts at the state and federal levels to keep Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program strong for children. In addition, the AAP is working to ensure that immigrant children in federal custody receive appropriate medical care, including the flu vaccine.

Promoting Vaccine Confidence

The AAP is advocating to increase vaccine confidence and share accurate messages on the importance, safety, and effectiveness of vaccines. AAP partnered with SELF magazine to create a copyright-free collection of positive, diverse photos to illustrate immunization content. The AAP routinely promotes positive vaccine messages through multiple social media platforms, a pediatrician-authored blog, HealthyChildren.org, national public service announcements on TV and radio, podcasts, and news articles and segments placed in traditional media outlets.

As a result of AAP advocacy, federal legislation, the VACCINES Act of 2019, was introduced by Reps. Kim Schrier, MD, FAAP, (D-Wash.) and Michael Burgess, MD, (R-Texas) and would bolster efforts to address vaccine misinformation and improve rates of vaccine confidence nationally.

Reducing Administrative Burden

Vaccine administration often requires burdensome, time-consuming work for pediatric practices that does not always result in improved patient care. For instance, data collection and reporting on vaccine administration are not harmonized between rules for electronic health record interoperability and claims processing. Discrepancies between data exchange and claims processing lead to administrative burdens for practices. The AAP is engaging with the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology to address these and other administrative burdens related to vaccines.

Bolstering Immunization Across the Globe

Immunization coverage, access, and affordability are issues that go beyond U.S. borders. An estimated 19.4 million infants worldwide continue to be under-immunized. More efforts are needed to increase immunization coverage, access, and affordability, and to fight against vaccine distrust globally, especially as infectious diseases know no boundaries.

The AAP is working to improve access to vaccines for children across the globe by ensuring adequate funding for global immunization accounts through the federal appropriations process and training partner pediatric societies to advocate at national and local levels to improve enabling environments for vaccine delivery.



GET INVOLVED

For up-to-date advocacy opportunities, visit federaladvocacy.aap.org or contact your state chapter.

For more information, contact immunize@aap.org.

