



AAFP Organizational Update

August 2021

AAFP Operations

- The AAFP, like other organizations, continues to navigate the ongoing public health emergency associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. The AAFP continues to offer our programs and events in a virtual format and will continue to do so through the early fall of 2021.
- The AAFP's [Family Medicine Experience](#) and Congress of Delegates will be held September 26 – October 2, 2021.
- **Senior Leadership Update** – On July 1st, Margot Savoy, MD officially joined the AAFP staff as the Senior Vice President of Education.

NASEM Report on Implementing High Quality Primary Care

The AAFP joined with ACP, AAP, SGIM, ABFM, ABIM and ABP in sending a letter to Department of Health & Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra signaling general support for the NASEM report and pledging to work with the Secretary and his team on implementing the key findings of the report.

The AAFP co-hosted a virtual national briefing on the NASEM report – [Implementing High Quality Primary Care](#) on Wednesday, May 26th. The briefing featured two members of the NASEM Committee, Carrie Colla, PhD (The Dartmouth Institute) and Tumaini Rucker Coker, MD, MBA (University of Washington & Seattle Children's).

Primary Care for America

In June, the AAFP and 13 other primary care organizations collaborated to launch [Primary Care for America](#). Our official launch was preceded by a public call to action authored by AAFP President Ada Stewart, MD and George M. Abraham, MD, MPH, President of the American College of Physicians. The [editorial](#) articulated the countries historical failure to prioritize and finance primary care and the consequences we are facing as a result.

Over the fall, the collaboration will focus on primary care innovations in Medicare, Medicaid and commercial insurance and the importance of growing the primary care workforce. The campaign is actively running Twitter and LinkedIn campaign promoting the value of primary care to individuals and communities and will feature large scale advertising in publications targeting key influencers

COVID-19

AAFP Update

The Academy continues our work to [keep our members informed](#) about developments related to the COVID-19 pandemic including clinical information, education, and practice management resources. A major focus is now on the COVID-19 vaccines, and AAFP has dedicated webpages (www.aafp.org/covidvaccine) which cover vaccine authorization, safety and efficacy information, and educational resources to address vaccine misinformation. The AAFP also is providing support to members and their practices as they work to help their patients and communities. Familydoctor.org is being updated with important information the public should know about the vaccines. In addition,

the AAFP is also partnering with numerous external organizations and campaigns to aid in encouraging COVID-19 vaccination efforts and addressing vaccine hesitancy and misinformation.

Continuing Professional Development Update

The AAFP recently secured a new educational grant around the topic of COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy and confidence. The funder for this grant is Johnson and Johnson (J&J). The grant will include multiple continuing medical education (CME) sessions that will be made available to our members as a free resource. In addition, FMX 2021 session will feature programming on the need to improve vaccine confidence. The AAFP also submitted a proposal to Pfizer for a comprehensive educational grant to equip members and their care team to effectively manage the short and potential long-term impact of COVID-19.

Vaccine Information and Education

AAFP resources have been created or made available to aid members in addressing patient questions and include:

- Updated [COVID-19 Vaccine FAQs](#)
- Tools to educate patients: [Dr. Ada Stewart shares patient-friendly resources](#) from the "We Can Do This" campaign aimed at fighting vaccine misinformation.
- Support conversations with the healthcare team: [sample COVID-19 vaccine presentation](#).
- Links to CDC Interim Guidance and Resources

Familydoctor.org content related to COVID-19 continues to be updated as appropriate. There is a substantial amount of general vaccine information designed to address vaccine hesitancy. www.familydoctor.org/vaccines

Therapeutics and Post-COVID Syndrome

The AAFP has been working with the CDC on interim guidance for managing Post-COVID Syndrome (e.g. "long-haul Covid"). A panel session was held on July 21 with members to discuss the CDC guidance and provide practical information for identifying and managing patients with Post-COVID Syndrome as well as coordination of care between specialties. The panel included multiple perspectives from members practicing in urban, rural, and underserved communities as well as in the urgent care and residency settings. Additional resources are in the process of being developed to support members as these patients will be routinely managed in primary care.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Center for Diversity and Health Equity (CDHE)

The CDHE organized a [Town Hall on April 14](#) in observance of Black Maternal Health Week (BMHW) in an effort to deepen the conversation about Black maternal health in the U.S.

During AAFP Annual Chapter Leader Forum, the CDHE facilitated a session with chapter executives and leaders titled "Navigating Change: A Chapter Leader's Role in Advancing Racial Equity". Staff were encouraged by the robust discussion among attendees.

The CDHE completed a collaborative project with the School Based Health Alliance (SBHA) involving two national learning collaboratives to increase the awareness of social determinants of health (SDOH) and social needs screenings in school-based health clinics.

The AAFP submitted [comments](#) to the Office of Management and Budget on areas to improve equity in programs across the government. The comments encompassed payment considerations, data collection and standardization, technological advancements, broadband, language accessibility, and financial assistance.

The AAFP and four other frontline physician organizations endorsed the Anti- Racism in Public Health Act and called for improved funding and research efforts on systemic racism.

The AAFP publicly [recognized](#) Black Maternal Health Week and commended HHS for taking actions to improve maternal health access.

Payment and Practice

CY 2022 Medicare Physician Fee Schedule (MPFS)

On July 13, 2021, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) released the CY 2022 Medicare Physician Fee Schedule (MPFS) [proposed rule](#). This regulation also impacts the Quality Payment Program (QPP). CMS also released accompanying fact sheets on the [MPFS](#) and [QPP](#). Comments on the proposed rule are due by September 13, 2021. The AAFP will thoroughly review the proposed rule and provide comments to CMS. The final rule will be released around November 1, 2021, and will take effect on January 1, 2022, except where specified otherwise in the final rule. The Academy's [developed a summary](#) of the proposed rule and plans to send detailed comments to CMS in August. The **AAFP** urged Congress in a letter to take action to prevent cuts to Medicare payment. Without new legislation, the 2022 Medicare conversion factor will decrease by 3.75 percent.

Primary Care First (PCF)

CMMI released a [Request for Applications \(RFA\) for Cohort 2](#) of the PCF model on March 16, 2021. For Cohort 2, CMMI accepted applications from all practices, including CPC+ and non-CPC+ practices, that met the eligibility criteria in 26 regions. Cohort 2 will begin in January 2022 and run through 2026. Applications were due May 21, 2021 for practices and June 18, 2021 for payers. No payment methodology changes were announced in the RFA.

AAFP and ACP developed a [practice sign-on letter](#) encouraging CMMI to implement a bridge to ensure the progress and investments CPC/CPC+ practices made are not lost once the program sunsets. The letter had 167 signatories and was sent to CMMI on May 18. Practices noted their appreciation for the opportunity to communicate their concerns to CMMI. Additionally, the AAFP and ACP collaborated on a [joint letter](#) outlining recommended improvements to PCF.

Advocacy

The AAFP held a highly successful Family Medicine Advocacy Summit in a virtual setting. A total of 32 state chapters were represented in Congressional meetings. Attendees participated in 155+ congressional meetings (41 Senate meetings / 115 House meetings), and participants were highly engaged on social media.

The AAFP launched a new advocacy twitter account (@AAFP_advocacy) just before FMAS this year. The account will be used to highlight federal advocacy efforts and engage with policy makers.

AAFP Members, Dr. Kisha Davis and Dr. Warren Ferguson, were selected to serve on the HHS Medicaid Reentry Workgroup, which advises the Secretary on issues related to Medicaid coverage for previously incarcerated individuals.

Payment Reform and Practice Transformation

The AAFP continues to advocate with CMMI on development of alternative payment models. The AAFP signed on to a [joint letter](#) to CMS outlining potential improvements to CMMI's design and implementation of alternative payment models. The letter urges CMMI to partner closely with the physician community moving forward.

The COVID-19 pandemic forced the widespread and rapid adoption of telehealth by family physicians. Several legislative and regulatory flexibilities have been put in place to accommodate the increased need for telehealth. The AAFP and four other frontline physician organizations sent [a letter](#) to Congressional leadership calling for Medicaid payment parity.

The AAFP [endorsed](#) the Protecting Rural Telehealth Access Act (S.1988), which ensures rural and underserved community health care physicians can continue offering telehealth services, including the ability to offer audio-only telehealth appointments, after the current public health emergency ends. The bill would also permanently waive the geographic restriction allowing patients to be treated from their home. AAFP member Dr. Davis [testified](#) before the Senate Finance Committee on COVID-19 flexibilities and lessons learned, particularly as it relates to the telehealth.

Reducing Administrative Burden

The AAFP continues to work with the CMS on the [Patients Over Paperwork](#) initiative. The AAFP [endorsed](#) the Safe Step Act to implement transparency guidelines to prevent inappropriate use of step therapy in employer-sponsored

health plans and create a clear process for patients and physicians to seek reasonable exceptions to step therapy.

Student Choice of Family Medicine

Residency Leadership Summit

Residency Leadership Summit (previously known as PDW-RPS Symposium (Program Director Workshop-Residency Program Solutions) was held March 4 – 6, 2021 virtually. The 2020 event was cancelled due to the COVID-19 outbreak. Over 1000 attendees participated in numerous sessions, main stage presentations, poster sessions, and networking opportunities. The 2022 event is planned to be live in Kansas City, March 25-27.

National Conference of Family Medicine Residents and Medical Students

National Conference was held virtually July 29-31, 2021. This year's event featured two main stage presentations, pre-recorded and live workshops, wellness, and social activities. Additionally, facilitated networking sessions (on a variety of topics) gave attendees multiple opportunities to meet and connect with other attendees. The Expo Hall, always a highpoint of National Conference, utilized the platform's Artificial Intelligence functionality to assist attendees in finding exhibitors, attendees and speakers who share interests.

Public Relations

In 2019, the AAFP begin a campaign to elevate the profile of family physicians in the hearts and minds of health care consumers in the United States by using a team of media-trained family physicians (media ambassadors) to participate in interviews with various media outlets.

Here is recent summary of the consumer public relations efforts. Key areas of focus for 2021 are COVID-19, preventive health, immunizations, and mental health.

- Program impact for first two years (earned media):
 - 299 total news stories
 - 496 unique media outlets
 - Over 2.1 billion impressions
- Consumer immunization campaign
 - The campaign aimed to move patients from vaccine hesitancy to vaccine confidence by emphasizing that vaccines are a selfless act of prevention that protects individuals who are more vulnerable and builds a community of immunity.
 - The campaign featured an inspirational video and educational patient content across www.familydoctor.org/vaccines and social media. Family physicians across the country offered custom band-aids to drive awareness and facilitate meaningful conversations with patients. They spoke with the media about campaign messages to elevate the importance of vaccines to consumer audiences.
 - The general campaign ended in March 2021. The COVID-19 vaccine-specific campaign is currently underway.
 - Initial campaign results exceeded goals across most measurements.