

APTA Pediatrics COVID-19 Work Group Introduction and Getting Started

The novel coronavirus outbreak has affected rehabilitation services in all settings, introducing new burdens on healthcare providers, patients, and families. Pediatric physical therapy is not different, and responses to the pandemic significantly impacted service delivery. Overall, the inadequate preparation of the rehabilitation system to face a sudden pandemic is clear with continuous reorganization and adaptation required.

There has been a need to provide professionals with timely information on the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on rehabilitation services and plans to mitigate its impact. Subsequently, there is a proliferation of published documents on the impact of COVID-19 as well as documents and recommendations on how to provide rehabilitation services during the pandemic. Several professional rehabilitation organizations have issued documents to guide rehabilitation services. The American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) and its components (Academies, Sections and Chapters) have issued documents and guidelines regarding the impact of the pandemic on physical therapy services and strategies for reorganization and adaptation during and post pandemic. Although these documents and guidelines are beneficial for physical therapists, there is a need for documents that are specific to the pediatric population.

The APTA Academy of Pediatric Physical Therapy (APTA Pediatrics) has undertaken several initiatives to assess the impact of COVID-19 on pediatric physical therapy, which includes impacts on clinicians, children and their families. APTA Pediatrics and its components (Special Interest Groups and Committees) have provided several webinars and documents to assist pediatric physical therapists during the pandemic to meet the needs of the populations they serve. In May 2020, APTA Pediatrics appointed a Pediatric COVID-19 Work Group to collaborate across all practice settings and Committees of APTA Pediatrics to identify the current and future impact of COVID-19 on individuals, families, communities, APTA Pediatrics members, academic institutions, DPT students, and new professionals.

There are significant and ever increasing unmet needs of children with disabilities worldwide. The COVID-19 pandemic has been detrimental to any effort to meet the needs of these children. The extreme challenges and long-range impact on vulnerable populations with and without disabilities is unknown. The APTA Pediatrics COVID-19 Work Group will identify strategies in all practice settings to support the populations we serve now and in the future. The Work Group includes individuals representing various practice settings and regions of the country.

The **vision** of the pediatric COVID-19 Work Group is “to promote safety, equity and excellence for pediatric physical therapists and the children/families we serve during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.” To achieve this vision the group plans:

- To develop and share the most up-to-date information from reputable sources to help keep children, families and physical therapists safe during this situation and beyond.
- To recognize that all people will not be able to access healthcare and services in the same way. We must be able to advocate to minimize inequities in pediatric physical therapy care.
- To promote excellence in practice to meet current and future client and community needs, inspired by innovation, collaboration and client/family-centered care.

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