

Medical Association Update | August 4, 2020

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Tue, Aug 4, 2020 at 4:19 PM



Health Department Releases Toolkit to Provide Guidance on Reopening of Schools



The Alabama Department of Public Health released a “toolkit” for schools on Monday that lays out protocols for in-school instruction and what to do if someone tests positive for COVID-19.

The 86-page document provides procedures for when a staff member or student tests positive for COVID-19, how to properly disinfect schools, how to report cases and determining school procedures based on level of risk determined by each county’s rate of infection, among other factors.

[View the toolkit here](#)

Eliminating Disparities in Care: What Can You Do?

Eliminating Racial Disparities: What Can You Do?



While the health of Americans overall has improved dramatically over the last century, these gains have not been shared equally, with racial and ethnic minorities continuing to have worse health outcomes. Examples of this include higher rates of hypertension, myocardial infarctions, strokes, heart failure, and chronic kidney disease and lower life expectancy seen in black individuals; and the increased rates of diabetes and infant mortality rate seen in Native Americans.

Education on healthcare disparities has focused on statistics and awareness. To address this issue effectively, the program, Eliminating Disparities in Healthcare: What Can You Do?, will provide physicians with an understanding of the causes of healthcare disparity and tools to help achieve healthcare equity.

[Sign up today!](#)

Proposed Expansion of Telehealth Benefits Beyond the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency and Advances Access to Care in Rural Areas



The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) is proposing changes to expand telehealth permanently, consistent with the Executive Order on Improving Rural and Telehealth Access that was signed yesterday. The Executive Order and proposed rule advance our efforts to improve access and convenience of care for Medicare beneficiaries, particularly those living in rural areas.

Additionally, the proposed rule implements a multi-year effort to reduce clinician burden under our Patients Over Paperwork initiative and to ensure appropriate reimbursement for time spent with patients. This proposed rule also takes steps to implement President Trump's Executive Order on Protecting and Improving Medicare for our Nation's Seniors and continues our commitment to ensure that the Medicare program is sustainable for future generations.

[See the alert from CMS](#)

America's Looming Primary-Care Crisis: Dr. Beverly Jordan featured in The New Yorker



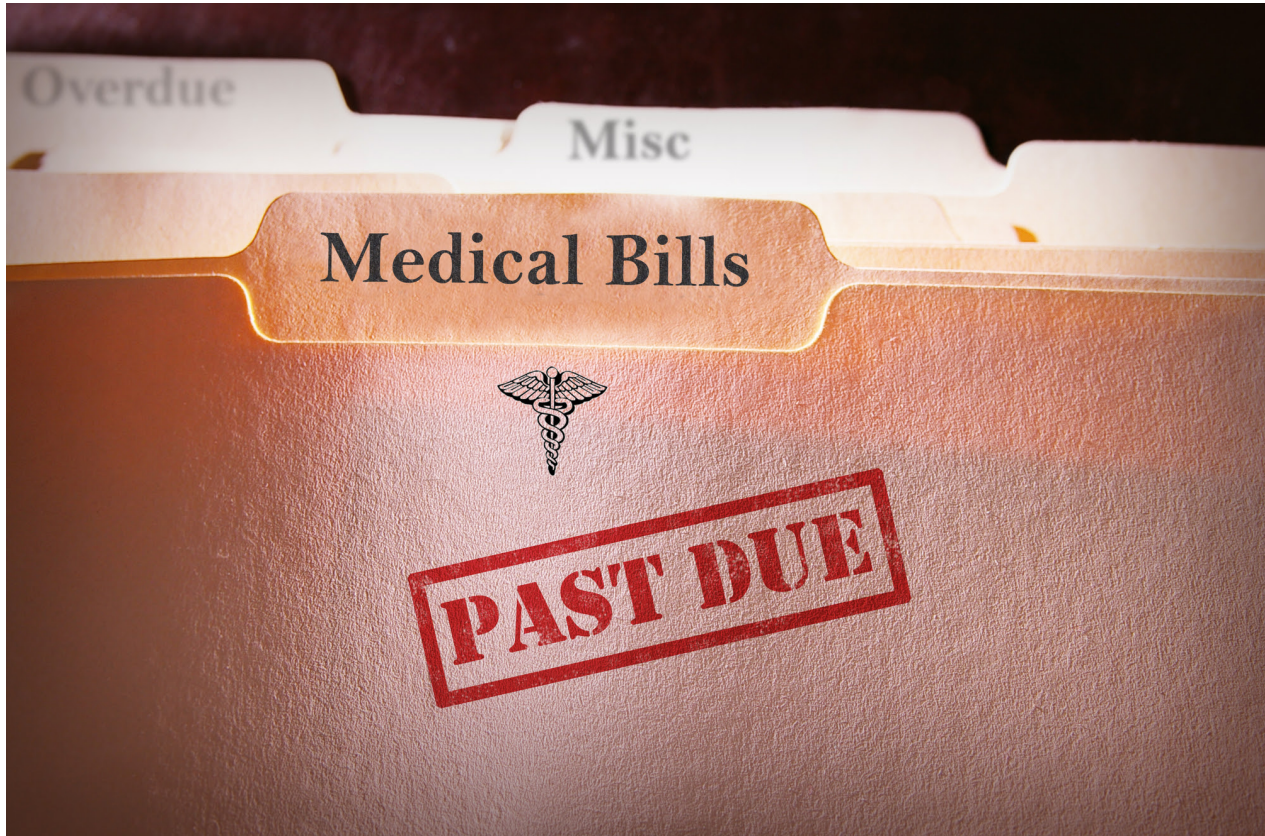
Beverly Jordan is a partner at a family-medicine clinic in Enterprise, Alabama. Enterprise is situated in “wiregrass country”—a largely rural region, encompassing southeastern Alabama and parts of Georgia and Florida, named for the ubiquitous vegetation that takes root in its sandy soil. Her clinic is one of a few offering primary care in the area; like many independent medical practices across the U.S., it has been gutted by the coronavirus pandemic.

Even though her practice received a lifeline from the federal government's Paycheck Protection Program (P.P.P.), Jordan had to take a pay cut, reduce staff hours, and lay off two new physicians

who were about to start work. "For the first time in my career, we're really just planning short-term," she told me recently. "We've never had this level of insecurity."

[See the story from The New Yorker](#)

Sign On Letter: Surprise Billing Legislation



The Medical Association of the State of Alabama signed on to a letter sent to Congressional leaders that opposed efforts to include surprise medical billing provisions in the new COVID-19 relief legislation under discussion in Congress. Organized by the American Medical Association, the letter makes the point that legislation to address the current public health emergency is not the appropriate vehicle or time to address this issue when agreement in significant outstanding issues remains elusive. However, we remain committed to helping find a solution that protects patients from unanticipated medical bills.

[See the letter here](#)

Report: 34 Percent Decline in Opioid Prescribing since 2014



According to a new report released by the American Medical Association, Alabama physicians have reduced opioid prescribing by 34.4% since 2014, increased the use of state prescription drug monitoring programs (PDMP) and decreased the total morphine milligram equivalents by 46.6% since 2014. Our physicians also have continued to educate themselves on safe prescribing, pain management and recognizing signs of addiction.

[Download our official statement here.](#)

[**See the full official statement on NewsCenter**](#)



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