



*Leading Through COVID-19*

## THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON CHILDREN'S HOSPITALS

Although children are at less risk of becoming seriously ill from COVID-19, the financial constraints at children's hospitals are often just as significant as adult health care organizations. Mark Wietecha, CEO of the Children's Hospital Association representing 200 children's hospitals, noted that in the first quarter of 2020, associate members estimate losing 20% of total cash flow due to deferring elective procedures.<sup>1</sup> Guidelines from the White House urging hospitals to cancel elective surgeries did not differentiate between children's hospitals and adult hospitals.

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Philanthropy leaders from children's hospitals are actively recruiting donations of PPE, medical equipment and financial resources for COVID-19, yet many have stated they feel reluctant to make

a strong case for support to avoid competing with the needs of local adult hospitals. According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), cases for children are not as severe; however, it is important to note serious COVID-19 illness resulting in hospitalization still occurs.

Now is the time for philanthropy leaders at children's hospitals to broaden and share urgent cases for support, especially while health care is top of mind. Make the case for giving to pediatric health care, making children an essential part of

the story. Even in the face of a global pandemic, cancer does not vanish and pediatric diseases continue to flourish. Accidents still occur, and children still need medical care and family support. Additionally, it is surmised that while children

are not as negatively impacted by COVID-19, they can be carriers, leaving uncertainties as to what the full potential medical complications might be.

**How can children's hospitals continue to move their missions forward?** Consider these ideas:

- Set up a fund to support employees who are challenged on the front lines every day.
- Encourage the community to support your social work fund to help families of children who are under financial constraints due to job loss and travel expenses.
- Create a campaign with COVID-19 prevention as the launching pad. Educate children and parents on the importance of hygiene and social distancing.
- Design a behavioral health campaign, focusing on anxiety in children in this time of uncertainty.
- Initiate fundraising efforts around pediatric telehealth. The Centers of Medicare and Medicaid Services have loosened the regulations in response to COVID-19, and many are now becoming familiar with the benefits and ease of telehealth. Philanthropic funds could support technology and training software for your health care providers.
- Establish an Infectious Disease Research Fund studying COVID-19 and the lasting effects of the virus on entire families.
- Tell the story of how child life specialists are keeping kids smiling and occupied with fun and interactive activities that fill voids due to limited family visitations.

In special circumstances, children's hospitals are adapting their services and are willing to accept adult patients. This provides an additional opportunity for philanthropic support. Rainbow Babies & Children in Cleveland and Children's Hospital Colorado are two examples.<sup>1</sup> Nemours/Alfred I. duPont Hospital for Children in Delaware has converted their sports medicine gym into a mini field hospital to house adult patients who do not have COVID-19 to relieve hospitals that become overcrowded. The Children's Hospital Association (CHA) is discouraging state and local officials from sending adult patients to their hospitals. Instead they are encouraging hospitals that treat adults and children to send their children to children's hospitals, freeing up capacity for the adult hospital. Despite this recommendation, many children's hospitals are still helping to accommodate the rise in COVID-19 cases in their communities, creating additional need for support.

While children are not as negatively-impacted by COVID-19, now is not the time to press the pause button on fund development. Expand your thinking by looking beyond the short-term needs of your hospital. The effects of this pandemic will be ongoing with our children. Philanthropy will play a critical role in the future of changing and saving the lives of children through and beyond this pandemic.

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<sup>1</sup>Tara Bannow, As COVID-19 Cases Threaten Capacity, Children's Hospitals Resist Taking Adults, *Modern Healthcare*, March 24, 2020.