

AAP to use federal Zika funds to create network of trained providers

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Bolstered by funding from federal agencies, the Academy will be training pediatricians around the country to care for children who have contracted congenital Zika virus infection.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) announced Thursday it would award the Academy \$350,000 to help prepare providers. The funds come on the heels of a \$450,000 award from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to the Academy and the American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists.

“Clinicians worldwide have limited experience caring for infants or children of women exposed to Zika virus during pregnancy, and no network exists to connect providers newly caring for these patients with one another and with those who have relevant expertise,” HHS Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response Nicole Lurie, M.D., M.S.P.H., said in a news release. “The AAP effort can help us bridge this gap so that providers can learn from one another and are better prepared to support and care for their patients.”

In July, the CDC and the Academy convened a meeting of pediatric experts using some of the CDC award money. The group provided input to the CDC as it developed guidance on caring for children who have congenital Zika infections regardless of whether abnormalities are apparent at birth. The guidance was published last month in the *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*.



The new HHS funding takes the next step by helping primary care providers and other pediatric clinicians implement that guidance through the medical home. These providers will play a crucial role in evaluating children, supporting families and coordinating care with numerous specialists, including infectious diseases doctors, neurologists, endocrinologists, ophthalmologists and geneticists.

To prepare for this role, the Academy will use the **Project ECHO** (Extension for Community Healthcare Outcomes) telementoring model to connect experts with clinicians in the U.S. and Puerto Rico, creating a network of trained providers.

AAP CEO/Executive Director Karen Remley, M.D., M.B.A., M.P.H., FAAP, said she is grateful to HHS and the CDC for providing funding for the Academy's Zika response.

“These funds will help our pediatricians stay at the forefront of this emerging health threat and give them tools to care for children who may experience a broad spectrum of health impacts from this devastating infection,” Dr. Remley said.

In U.S. states and Washington, D.C., there have been 2,722 cases of the mosquito-borne infection, including 624 pregnant women, according to the CDC. In Puerto Rico there have been more than 10,000 total cases, including more than 1,000 pregnant women, according to HHS.

Residents of 48 states have been infected so pediatricians nationwide should be prepared, said Fan Tait, M.D., FAAP, AAP associate executive director and director of the Department of Child Health and Wellness.

“Whether from traveling or whether it’s from the mosquitoes being in your community ... the potential is there for members to see infants with this,” Dr. Tait said.

The Academy will begin work on the training project in October and will announce educational opportunities as they become available. Pediatricians should continue to report suspected congenital Zika cases to their state, local, tribal or territorial health officials and provide clinical information throughout the infant’s first year to the [U.S. Zika Pregnancy Registry](#) or [Puerto Rico Zika Active Pregnancy Surveillance System](#) so the CDC can monitor outcomes and adjust recommendations accordingly.

Resources

- [CDC Zika website](#)
- [AAP Zika website](#)
- [Information for clinicians](#)
- [Information for parents](#)
- [AAP News story “CDC releases new guidance on caring for infants with congenital Zika”](#)
- [Confirmed Zika cases by state](#)

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