

## ALF highlights include debate on vaccine hesitancy, virtual health care

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Vaccine hesitancy and virtual health care were key topics of debate at the Annual Leadership Forum (ALF) March 10-13.

Members took to the microphones to comment on 136 resolutions. Of those, 120 resolutions were adopted during this year's Annual Leadership Forum. Photo courtesy of Joseph J. Abularrage, M.D., M.P.H., M.Phil., FAAP

In addition, ALF voters adopted 120 of 136 resolutions presented and selected the Top 10 they felt the Academy should address urgently (see below). Resolutions are considered the "springboard" for AAP initiatives and serve as advice to the Board of Directors on the direction of policies and procedures.



The top resolution this year requests that the Academy recognize that children in Puerto Rico and U.S. territories should receive equal treatment with the Medicaid program as do all other 50 states and the District of Columbia. In addition, the Academy, in concert with other organizations, should advocate for Congress to pass legislation that eliminates Medicaid inequality in Puerto Rico and the territories.

The aims of the ALF include drawing on expertise within the Academy to make recommendations to the Board of Directors; promoting communication among chapter, committee, council and section leaders; incorporating diverse perspectives in the discussion and debate of leading pediatric issues; integrating and promoting understanding of AAP strategic priorities, policy development, education and advocacy; and providing leadership education and inspiration for volunteer leaders.

### Hot topics debated

Nearly 400 AAP leaders engaged in a lively debate on best practices for handling patients whose parents refuse immunizations.

In addition, an expert panel responded to audience questions regarding virtual health care and how pediatricians can leverage technology while ensuring access to the medical home during a town hall titled "Don't Lose Your Patients to the Cloud: Virtual Health – Opportunities and Threats."



Dr. Del Beccaro "ALF attendees and the panelists engaged in discussion around legal issues, practical issues and most importantly the changing paradigm and future of digital health," said moderator Mark Del Beccaro, M.D., FAAP, chair of the Council Management Committee. "The panelists pointed out the importance of trust in the relationship and that this should not be viewed as replacing the medical home relationship but an important tool to stay connected with patients."

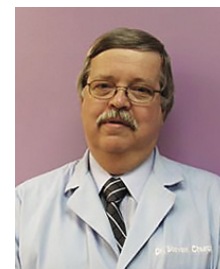
Attendees also discussed five strategic pediatric issues: poverty and child health, violence, vaccine hesitancy, physician wellness, and emergency medicine around the world.

"The Academy's release of the statement *Poverty and Child Health in the United States* the day before the ALF made the discussions very timely and relevant among the leaders of the chapters, committees, councils and sections," said Andrew Racine, M.D., Ph.D., FAAP, chair of the AAP Poverty and Child Health Leadership Workgroup.

## Resolutions discussed, voted on Dr. Church

A month before the meeting, resolutions were posted online and AAP members could comment on them.

“Online access to resolutions by AAP members prior to ALF continues to be a huge success,” said Stephen Church, M.D., FAAP, chair of the Chapter Forum Management Committee, the group that oversees the resolution process. “Our members participated with over 2,000 votes and nearly 500 comments that were considered during the reference committee hearings and report-writing sessions.”

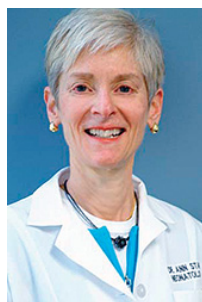


Reference committee hearings, held prior to resolution voting, provided a venue for clarification of resolutions and allowed members and AAP staff to voice concerns and ideas.

## Second City takes on ALF

The Chicago-based improvisational troupe Second City delivered a training on effective communications. Supported by an educational grant from Abbott Nutrition, the workshop focused on building conversation, active listening and making every message count.

The actors presented scenes based on feedback from attendees on their most common communication challenges and then had participants work through exercises to hone their skills.



Dr. StarkAnn Stark, M.D., FAAP, chair of the Section Forum Management Committee, said the Second City workshop was a highlight of this year’s meeting. “They conveyed an important message of active listening with humor, effectively engaged the audience and nimbly responded to tough questions.” **Training workshops well-received**

Interactive seminars allowed ALF participants to further develop their leadership skills.

Sessions and workshops were held on legal issues for chapters, grants management, AAP policy-writing process, strategic planning, state advocacy challenges and opportunities, conflict resolution, and media training.

“We tried a number of different approaches when putting together this year’s ALF,” said Elizabeth “Sooze” Hodgson, M.D., FAAP, chair of the 2016 meeting. “People left the sessions energized and engaged.”

Chapter, committee, council and section leaders each held their own forums. The section chairs discussed facilitating adult learning and behavior change as well as succession planning, while chapter leaders tackled how to be a leader in disaster preparedness and response.

## New leadership Dr. Hodgson

Dr. Hodgson, who expertly moderated the 2016 ALF, said she is impressed with the work that AAP leaders put forth year after year.

“As I was standing in the security line at O’Hare, a first-time ALF attendee was ahead of me, and I asked her what she thought of ALF. She told me that she was energized from talking with so many amazing thinkers from all across the country and said the ALF gave her so many ideas,” Dr. Hodgson said. “She also said that she wants to share what she learned in her practice and not lose what she described as ‘ALF energy.’ This is exactly what we set out to do!”



At the close of the ALF, Dr. Hodgson passed the gavel to Dr. Church, who will chair the 2017 ALF.

## Top 10 resolutions

1. Medicaid Parity for the Children of Puerto Rico and all United States Territories
2. AAP Policy Statement on Personal Belief (Non-Medical) Exemptions for Immunizations
3. Supporting Pediatricians Who Discharge Families Who Refuse to Immunize
4. AAP Support of Planned Parenthood’s and Other Providers’ Missions to Provide Critical Sexual Health Care Services to Adolescents

5. Protecting the Rights of Children Born to Unauthorized Immigrants in the United States
6. Protecting the Well-being of All Undocumented Immigrant Children Detained by United States Officials
7. Mandatory Child Resistant Packaging for all Marijuana (Including Edibles) Sold in States Which Have Legalized Recreational or Medicinal Marijuana
8. AAP Participation and Advocacy for Firearm Safety Research
9. Creation of a Center for Physician and Other Health Care Provider Resiliency
10. Reducing the High Cost of Epinephrine Auto-Injectors

### **Resources**

- [List of 2016 resolutions \(login required\)](#)  
For more information on the Annual Leadership Forum, contact Nicole Blankenship, in the AAP Division of Chapter and District Relations, at 800-433-9016, ext. 7862, or [nblankenship@aap.org](mailto:nblankenship@aap.org).
- ["2016 Annual Leadership Forum Awards"](#)
- ["Letter from the President: Vaccines on minds of Annual Leadership Forum attendees"](#)

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