

# How to Bridge Gaps in Preventive Care

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The Alliance for Patient Access ([allianceforpatientaccess.org](http://allianceforpatientaccess.org)), founded in 2006, is a national network of physicians dedicated to ensuring patient access to approved therapies and appropriate clinical care. AfPA accomplishes this mission by recruiting, training and mobilizing policy-minded physicians to be effective advocates for patient access. AfPA is organized as a non-profit 501(c)(4) corporation and headed by an independent board of directors. Its physician leadership is supported by policy advocacy management and public affairs consultants. In 2012, AfPA established the Institute for Patient Access (IfPA), a related 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation. In keeping with its mission to promote a better understanding of the benefits of the physician-patient relationship in the provision of quality healthcare, IfPA sponsors policy research and educational programming.



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The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported a significant drop off in provider orders through the Vaccines for Children Program. The program, which provides federally purchased vaccines to approximately half of children, saw roughly 3 million fewer doses of vaccine ordered in April, as compared to 2019.<sup>1</sup>

Child vaccinations were down across the country but declines among the hardest hit urban areas were staggering. New York City, for example, in mid-May reported a “shocking” 91% decrease

in vaccinations for children older than two.<sup>2</sup> While the downfall in suburban and rural areas was not as severe, millions of children around the country missed routine immunizations. In many cases, immunizations were missed because well-child visits were canceled.

So how can providers and health systems ensure that missed visits, especially those that coincide with immunizations, get made up?

One large health system has a few suggestions. Nemours health system, which operates hospitals and primary care practices in three states, saw a 28.5% decrease in immunizations among pediatric patients between March and May. (3) Yet they rebounded strong. As recently highlighted in *Fierce Healthcare*, Nemours is now 4.6% above last year’s total immunization rate for children.

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Here’s their three-pronged approach to buck the trend:

1. **Creating patient cohorts:** Nemours separated sick visits from well visits. This was done by time-blocking within single offices so that certain times of the day were reserved for well patients only, while sick patients visited during other hours. In areas with closely located offices, some clinics were earmarked “clean practices.” These locations saw only newborns or kids who were not sick.
2. **Increasing use of telehealth:** Nemours dusted off its underused telemedicine infrastructure. It created a virtual queue that allowed patients to be seen virtually on-demand, “almost like walk-in patients.”
3. **Outreach to patients:** With fewer in-person visits, Nemours reallocated some staff to make outbound

