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## Ensuring Care for Our Most Vulnerable: Cincinnati Children's and the ATA

Cincinnati Children's has long recognized the potential of telehealth as a lifeline for their most vulnerable patients and families who want to access care delivered by the nation's leading pediatric health system. Across their journey, the ATA has served as an invaluable partner in the success of Cincinnati Children's telehealth program—helping support their virtual care offerings and exponential growth in telehealth appointments, from a handful to thousands in just a few years.

### About Cincinnati Children's

Cincinnati Children's, a pioneer in pediatric care, is a longstanding member of the American Telemedicine Association (ATA). As the leading pediatric health system in the nation recognized by U.S. News & World Report, Cincinnati Children's serves a unique and vulnerable demographic. The health system treats patients in multiple states who have exhausted local resources and arrive at Cincinnati Children's to access the provider's specialized care.

As [Tori Ames](#), Telehealth Director at Cincinnati Children's, explained, "Patient families come to Cincinnati Children's looking for answers, at some of the most vulnerable times in their lives. Telehealth allows them to stay in their home communities for some or all of that care, and maintain important aspects like employment, education and social networks."

The health system delivers telehealth care across almost all of its subspecialties, serving patients from across a wide geography that includes remote and underserved communities. Recognizing the barriers

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to access and challenges many parents face navigating a complex healthcare system, Cincinnati Children's has always prioritized their telehealth offerings, which are a crucial aspect of their operations.

Cincinnati Children's involvement in the ATA is about their active participation in the organization and contributions to shared goals. Recent industry announcements and the ATA's role in telehealth flexibility extensions have demonstrated the collective efforts and wins achieved in ensuring telehealth access, and Cincinnati Children's is actively engaged in many of the ATA's key initiatives. As the hospital continues to navigate today's 'choppy waters' of the healthcare industry, the system draws strength from its alliance with the ATA and the organization's commitment to revolutionizing pediatric care.

## Helping Cincinnati Children's Maintain a Lifeline to Vulnerable Patients

In the complex and rapidly evolving world of telehealth, Cincinnati Children's membership in the ATA has proven invaluable. Their affiliation dates to the inception of the health system's telehealth department, which serves to close care gaps across a large and geographically dispersed pediatric patient population. However, this service model has recently faced potential roadblocks from proposed rollbacks of pre-pandemic prescribing flexibilities.

Many of the temporary flexibilities put in place during the pandemic, allowing access to telehealth services, have been extended through the end of 2024. If these flexibilities are not made permanent, it could place considerable strain on the health system's resources, especially when serving areas with small populations of vulnerable patients. For Cincinnati Children's, these restrictions could also impact access to crucial medications for treating conditions affecting their patients, such as epilepsy, severe mental health challenges, and pain management.

In these uncertain times, the ATA emerged as a trusted source of information and guidance. For example, the ATA's thought leadership and frequent member updates enabled the hospital to gain a deeper understanding of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency's (DEA) regulations on the remote prescribing of controlled substances. Armed with foresight and greater predictability into what to expect over the coming months, Tori and her team were better able to help prepare Cincinnati Children's for regulatory challenges, how to invest resources, and what ongoing changes meant for their patients and clinicians.

"Understanding the ever-changing legal and regulatory framework became crucial. The ATA's government relations insights allowed Cincinnati Children's to anticipate and adapt."





For Cincinnati Children's, it isn't just about understanding the regulatory landscape, but also the ability to amplify the unique concerns and challenges of pediatric care within the broader telehealth dialogue. Opportunities to share their perspectives and gain feedback during ATA hosted events has helped ensure the pediatric voice was well represented as part of telehealth and virtual care discussions. The ATA has served as an essential bridge between regulatory and legislative decisions and the specific needs of pediatric telehealth.

## The Value of ATA Membership for Cincinnati Children's

For Cincinnati Children's, the ATA has become an indispensable ally navigating today's complex telehealth landscape, enabling the health system to continue its mission of providing care to its vulnerable patients, in their communities.

**Foundational Knowledge and Training:** The ATA's robust offerings of educational materials and events are critical to the hospital's training and onboarding, especially for training telehealth newcomers. As Cincinnati Children's onboards new employees with varying levels of experience in telehealth, the ATA website serves as a foundational training ground, featuring essential telehealth definitions, use cases and other resources.

**Advocacy and Regulatory Guidance:** As Cincinnati Children's looks to expand its telehealth services, understanding the ever-changing legal and regulatory framework is crucial. The ATA's Government Relations Special Interest Group (SIG) helps Cincinnati Children's anticipate and adapt to potential legislative shifts that could impact its operations and the health system's ability to treat patients and families facing formidable barriers to care access.

**Expanding Beyond Traditional Video Visits:** While video visits have long been the staple of telehealth, the ATA has been pivotal in highlighting the broader digital health landscape, including capabilities like asynchronous care, which Cincinnati Children's recognizes as a crucial frontier in pediatric care. This shift towards patient self-management and tools for in-between visits is part of the provider's strategic expansion of its digital care offerings.

**Collaboration and Shared Learning:** The ATA fosters a sense of community, allowing Cincinnati Children's to engage with industry experts, provider organizations and other stakeholders. While pediatric care has unique challenges compared to adult care, the opportunity to learn from the broader telehealth community is unparalleled.





**Planning for the Future:** Telehealth's explosive growth during the COVID era has been both an opportunity and a challenge. Cincinnati Children's recognizes the need to both consolidate and expand. Whether refining the traditional video visit model or expanding into areas like asynchronous care, the ATA's resources and expertise help chart the path forward.

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## Transforming Care: Cincinnati Children's and the ATA

The relationship between Cincinnati Children's and the ATA exemplifies the transformative power of strategic partnerships in the evolving digital health landscape. Cincinnati Children's has long recognized the potential of telehealth, not just as a tool for delivering safe, effective, and convenient care, but as a lifeline for their most vulnerable patients—children whose families have exhausted local resources and are desperate for the specialized care that Cincinnati Children's can provide.

The ATA has served as an invaluable partner in supporting the success of Cincinnati Children's telehealth program. Whether it was foundational training for newcomers, crucial regulatory guidance, or insights into emerging trends, the ATA has been an indispensable guide. The hospital's exponential growth in virtual care, from a handful to thousands of interactions, is a testament to the successful integration of telehealth into their care model. And the ATA has been there, championing their efforts, providing resources, and ensuring that Cincinnati Children's remains at the telehealth frontier.

### About Cincinnati Children's

Cincinnati Children's ranks No. 1 in the nation in U.S. News & World Report's 2023-24 listing of Best Children's Hospitals. In addition, Cincinnati Children's is recognized as one of America's Most Innovative Companies by Fortune. Established in 1883, Cincinnati Children's is a nonprofit academic health system that is internationally recognized for improving child health and transforming delivery of care through research, education, and innovation. Nearly one-third of the health system's 18,500 employees are engaged in research, and Cincinnati Children's is one of the top two recipients of pediatric research grants from the National Institutes of Health. Additional information may be found at [CincinnatiChildrens.org](https://www.cincinnatichildrens.org)

