Physicians in private practice and employed by health systems are realizing the significant impact of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) on their work and personal lives. ACOG recognizes the financial strain resulting from the global pandemic and continues to advocate for policies to support you, your practice and your patients. Below are existing resources to help you navigate these challenges.

**Relief Funds**

The Health and Human Services Department is distributing relief funds to eligible physician practices. To see if your practice is eligible for funds and for more information on how to apply, visit our [Step-by-Step Guide: How Ob-gyns Can Access Federal Relief Funds](#).

**Financial Support for Small and Medium-sized Practices**

- For the latest information on small business loans, see our [FAQs for Practices: Financial Relief Provisions in the CARES Act](#).

- The Federal Reserve will soon launch the [Main Street Lending Program](#) to provide loans to U.S. businesses with up to 15,000 employees or $5 billion in 2019 revenue. This program will be in effect until September 30, 2020. For more information, visit the [Federal Reserve’s FAQs page](#).

- For a comprehensive list of federal disaster assistance programs, see USA Gov’s [disaster financial assistance page](#).

- [State governors](#) are offering small business loans and grants. Contact your state’s legislation and visit state government webpages to learn more.

**Advanced and Accelerated Payment Programs**

Several payers have implemented advanced or accelerated payment programs to assist practices during the COVID-19 pandemic and accompanying financial crisis. For more information, see our [resource on these programs](#) and talk to the payers you are contracted with.

**Student Loan Relief**

- Payments have been suspended for most federal student loans through September 30, 2020. There will also be no interest accrued on these federal loans through September 30th. This applies only to individuals who are current in repayment.

- For medical students who are graduating in 2020 and have not yet entered repayment, Interest will also not accrue for the six-month grace period.

For a summary on student loan forgiveness during COVID-19, see [this article from the AMA](#) and for more detailed information, see [FAQs from the Office of Federal Student Aid](#).

**Employee leave, taxes and unemployment**

ACOG recommends practices consult with local accountants and lawyers to determine the best course of action for their practice. Stay up-to-date on options for your practice, including:

- **Employee leave**

  - [Employers](#) with 50-500 employees must make 80 hours of paid leave available to full-time employees for several COVID related reasons, such as quarantine or self-isolation. Note: Many physician practices may qualify for exemptions.

  - [Tax credits](#): Employers receive 100% reimbursement for paid leave payments made to employees to comply with expanded leave policies.
• The Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) was expanded to provide paid leave for caregivers who cannot work due to school closures or unavailable child care.

• Deferred tax filing and payment deadlines
  • The IRS has extended the deadline for filing and payment of federal taxes to July 15, without penalty.
  • Employers of any size can defer payment of the employer Social Security tax (6.2%) beginning March 27 and ending December 31, 2020. 50% of what is deferred must be paid by December 31, 2021, with the remainder due by December 31, 2022. Note: you cannot defer this tax if your practice received a loan from the Paycheck Protection Program.

• Unemployment
  • States manage unemployment benefits, and the federal government is allowing modified unemployment benefits for COVID-19.

Practice Insurance

• Check with your state insurance commissioner or department for information related to business interruption or loss due to COVID-19.

• Ask your professional counsel if your policy or your state is including COVID-19 in their business interruption insurance.

Teleheath

Non-profit and public eligible practices can apply to be reimbursed for costs related to telehealth implementation through the COVID-19 Telehealth Program. Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis until there is no longer funding available or the pandemic has subsided. Follow these steps to apply:

• Create an FFC Registration Number as well as an account on the Commission Registration System (CORES)
• File FCC Form 460 to be assessed on your practice's eligibility for reimbursement. This form can be found here.
• Register on the federal System for Award Management

• After completing all of the above steps and being cleared as eligible, fill out the application on the CORES page.

Please visit the Federal Communications Commission website for more information.

ACOG has an additional number of resources that can help as you incorporate telemedicine into your practice, including:

• ACOG’s Guidance on Managing Patients Remotely: Billing for Digital and Telehealth Service
• COVID-19 FAQs for Obstetrician-Gynecologists, Telehealth
• ACOG’s Committee Opinion on Implementing Telehealth in Practice

Physicians should collaborate with their practice managers and accountants to determine their eligibility for relief programs. It is also important to look at state updates regarding paid and sick leave, unemployment, tax credits, emergency loans, bridge loans, and grants.

ACOG Advocacy

During the COVID-19 pandemic, ACOG is advocating for you, your practice, and your patients. Recently we have:

• Repeatedly called on The Department of Health and Human Services to quickly send federal relief funds to obstetrician-gynecologists.
• Urged the Small Business Administration, Federal Reserve, and Congress to prioritize the unique financial needs of physician practices and physicians who are on the front lines.
• Successfully advocated for broadened telehealth coverage and reimbursement policies, including payment parity for Medicare audio-only telehealth visits.

Follow this and more through social media @ACOGAction or online at www.acog.org/covid19

Information on practice management during Coronavirus is developing rapidly and ACOG will release updates to policy and funding opportunities as they arise. ACOG continues to support its members during this time. If you have any further question or concerns, please reach out to us and submit your questions at acogcoding.freshdesk.com