

Report urges pediatric practices to consider consent by proxy

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(HealthDay)—Issues relating to consent by proxy for non-urgent

pediatric care should be considered, according to a report published online Jan. 23 in *Pediatrics*.

Noting that minor-aged patients are often brought to the pediatrician by someone other than their legally authorized representative, Jonathan M. Fanaroff, M.D., and colleagues from the American Academy of Pediatrics Committee on Medical Liability and Risk Management address the need to balance minimizing physician [liability](#) exposure with patient access to health care.

The authors note that the liability risk is generally low when care provided is in the best interest of the child, even without appropriate consent. In certain situations, such as those that involve immunizations, language barriers, limited health literacy, and the initial visit, the risk is likely to be higher. Pediatricians should be aware of the medical consent laws where they practice, as practice is primarily regulated by the state. Pediatric practices should anticipate that situations involving consent by proxy can occur; policies should be developed that promote informed decision-making and management of risk. These policies should meet applicable laws without preventing access to necessary but non-urgent care. In order to maintain efficient office operations and strong physician-patient relationships, a legally sound office policy on consent by proxy should be developed.

"The report suggests practical steps that balance the need to minimize the physician's liability exposure with the patient's access to [health care](#)," the authors write.

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