



NEWS RELEASE

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Contact: Media Relations
Nationwide Children's Hospital
Marketing and Public Relations
(614) 355-0495

Telehealth Services Rapidly Expand at Nationwide Children's Hospital **Amid COVID-19 Response**

\$1 million gift from Columbus-based American Electric Power Foundation helps bolster telemedicine to patients and families across most service lines

(COLUMBUS, Ohio) – As the COVID-19 global pandemic continues, it is imperative community networks, including health care systems, modify how they provide services. Nationwide Children's Hospital has quickly adapted the way care is delivered to its patients and their families.

In response to Ohio's "Stay at Home" order and out of an abundance of caution for the health and safety of patients and their families, Nationwide Children's has implemented expanded telehealth services for most outpatient appointments.

"It is a priority that Nationwide Children's remains steady in providing the best possible health care for our patients and their families during these uncertain times," said [Tim Robinson](#), chief executive officer of Nationwide Children's. "Like so many other organizations, we had to adapt quickly, and we were able to effectively implement our expanded telehealth services. Even after COVID-19 is behind us, it is important we continue to innovate and provide these much-needed telehealth services to our patients."

Columbus-based American Electric Power (AEP) has long been a visionary partner in recognizing the many benefits of telehealth. A generous gift of \$1 million from the AEP Foundation enabled Nationwide Children's to lay the groundwork that led to this rapid expansion of services during the coronavirus challenge.

"We are thrilled our gift helped Nationwide Children's develop its telehealth capabilities so all children, no matter where they call home, can receive the best treatment," said Dale Heydlauff, senior vice president of Corporate Communications for AEP and president of the AEP Foundation. "Now more than ever, telehealth is an invaluable resource. We are proud to partner with Nationwide Children's as they take advantage of telehealth's benefits during this unprecedented time to ensure their patients still receive top-notch care while adhering to public health recommendations."

"During this time of physical distancing, the AEP Foundation's gift is helping Nationwide Children's continue our extraordinary care," Robinson said. "We were able to harness important infrastructure and technology, and many internal hospital teams have come together to swiftly put expanded telehealth services in operation for the benefit of patients, their families and hospital staff."



[Big Lots Behavioral Health Services](#) at Nationwide Children's was the first to offer online telehealth visits. From March 13 to April 2, 2020, they provided more than 8,000 telehealth encounters, compared to just 19 telehealth visits in all of 2019. The process has gone so well that most behavioral health appointments will be moving to telehealth-only for outpatient visits for the duration of the COVID-19 response.

“When this pandemic is over and this crisis has gone away—and there will come a time when we will go back to normal—I don't anticipate telehealth going away,” said [David Stukus, MD](#), a pediatric allergist and immunologist at Nationwide Children's. “If anything, we're going to build upon it, and we're going to see this in a lot of different aspects in our lives.”

There are a few tips to ensure a successful telehealth visit. Make sure you/your child:

- Are in a quiet, private place
- Are in a room with good lighting so your provider can see you
- Do not have your mute button on
- Use the best internet available (close all other internet browser windows or other apps)
- Have a full charge on your smartphone or computer – if not, please plug it in

Most insurance companies and governmental payors have expanded the use of telehealth in response to COVID-19. In addition, the Ohio Department of Medicaid implemented an emergency rule on telehealth services in the state.