

COVID-19 Updates as of March 23, 2020

It seems like every hour brings new information, and the FOA wants to continue supporting our members by sharing that information as quickly and completely as we can so you can make informed decisions about your practice, your health, and your future.

1. Did Governor DeSantis just sign an executive order on Friday March 20, 2020?

a. Yes. The governor signed an executive order stating:

i. *"All hospitals, ambulatory surgical centers, office surgery centers, dental, orthodontic and endodontic offices, and other health care practitioners' offices in the State of Florida are prohibited from providing any medically unnecessary, non-urgent or non-emergency procedure or surgery which, if delayed, does not place a patient's immediate health, safety, or wellbeing at risk, or will, if delayed, not contribute to the worsening of a serious or life-threatening medical condition. Accordingly, all health care practitioners licensed in the State of Florida, including dentists, shall immediately cease performing these elective services."*

2. What does all of it mean?

a. All elective procedures must be delayed unless a patient's life or immediate health is in danger.

3. What does this mean for optometry?

a. It does not affect optometry's role in the current national emergency situation. Use the CDC protocols for pre-screening patients, social distancing in your office by changing patient scheduling and flow, and contagious disease protocols for disinfection and protection while engaged with patients. **Inform patients that these protocol are being used and every precaution is in place for their protection.**

b. If a patient presents to your office after having been recommended to have the procedure, educate them on the executive order and the reasons not to continue with the procedure at this time.

4. If my office continues to see patients does my liability change at all?

- a. As a health care professional who provides essential services every day, your liability does not change. Continue to ensure you and your staff follow the proper protocols and educate your patients as to what these protocols are.
- b. Continue complete documentation of all encounters, including Telehealth with a proper assessment and plan.

5. Has there been any decision by the government to help employees of my business?

- a. Yes. There is a program to help employees earn unemployment wages if laid off during this time. [The link here is a guide to explain the plan.](#)
- b. As resolution to help small businesses failed to pass the senate last night. There is another vote this morning. **Optometry is included in the physicians relief legislation.**

6. What is the AOA doing on a national level to help its member ODs?

- a. As of Friday, the AOA has taken multiple steps to reroute funds into an emergency relief fund. It will be called the AOA Foundation Optometry Relief Fund. As more details emerge we as your state affiliate will pass the pertinent details to you.

7. Where does Florida stand in terms of COVID-19 cases and their distribution?

- a. [Click the link here for more information.](#)

8. What positives can be taken from the most recent developments?

- a. HR 6201 allows employers to receive a tax credit (quarterly) equal to 100% of qualified sick leave and family medical leave paid. Consult with your CPA once qualifying credits are applicable.
 - b. Potential treatment options for stemming COVID-19 symptoms and duration appear promising and are moving swiftly through FDA protocol
 - c. Your FOA Board is working closely together and with the Governor's office and the AOA to bring our members important updates.
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