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November 29, 2021

To the Families of our Patients,

As we come to the end of 2021 and look ahead to next year, we wish you and your families a happy holiday season and a healthy 2022. The COVID-19 pandemic has certainly presented many challenges to all of us. However, with COVID vaccines now available and kids back in school, we have seen that children are resilient! We are writing to inform you of our upcoming administrative change to the office. Beginning in 2022, we will be introducing a nominal annual administrative fee, and we hope this letter will answer any questions you may have.

The last 2 years brought many changes to The office. In order to keep suite 326 a safe place, we all but closed down the office, restricting in-person visits to the absolute essential ones, and shifted to helping our patients and families navigate the pandemic largely via phone – answering questions about COVID risks, infections, and exposures, in addition to tending to all of the usual healthcare issues. Soon after, it became apparent that the pandemic was taking an emotional toll on our patients, and we worked individually with our families to provide as much support virtually as we could and created regular group Zoom sessions with a Child Developmental Specialist and a Pediatrician.

As 2020 ended, the adult population began receiving vaccinations. Schools, camps, travel and sports reopened, and we were seeing patients who had not visited the office in person for almost two years. The number of school forms, camp forms, sports forms and immunization records increased exponentially. While happy and exciting, it was clear that times had changed. There was now a need for frequent COVID testing, so we arranged testing 7 days per week in our parking lot. We negotiated with labs to get results back within 24 hours and purchased our own PCR machines for even faster and more comprehensive results. These new services have helped our patients and families safely return closer to normal life but require significant administration and labor to maintain.

We knew that our patients would be most comfortable getting the COVID vaccine someplace familiar, so we began the bureaucratic task of becoming an official COVID vaccination site, months before it was approved for children. We even appeared on the local news giving the first shots to children in our area. We now have additional staff in the parking lot dedicated to vaccinating our community. This, too, required increased staff and has generated hours of phone and administration work.

The COVID-19 pandemic brought into clear focus that the doctors, staff and patients are extended family. Even as revenue dropped significantly due to fewer patient visits, and despite that offering new services meant additional cost, we continuously adapted to rapidly changing needs, firmly committed to the goal of providing the best possible support and care for our patients. We have come to the difficult decision that in order to continue offering the services upon which many of you have come to rely, as well as to add more services as needs arise, it will be necessary to introduce an annual fee beginning in 2022.

The fee will be \$100 per child with a maximum of \$200 per family per year. We have tried to keep this fee low and are sympathetic that the pandemic has stretched many families' finances. We always strive to be kind and understanding, so the fee is optional for all patients. Your family's fee will be collected at your first visit in 2022 and will renew annually on that date. There is an option to opt out at any time with no penalty.

Sincerely and with best wishes for a return to normalcy in the near future,

The Doctors