

# Our Editorial Style

Editorial style refers to the voice and tone that we use in our written communications. Our clear style requires using an active voice when possible. It also requires the use of correct grammar, including accurate sentence structure, verb tenses, and punctuation. When writing about Children's National Health System, we often use the first and second person in our writing, rather than referring only to ourselves and our patients in the third person.

This style guide draws from the Associated Press (AP Style), with additions and modifications that have evolved to address specific Children's National needs.

All written communications are tailored for their audience. At Children's National, when writing for a broad general public, we aim for a fourth to sixth grade reading level, which is the national standard for organizations like ours.

Public Relations and Marketing should see any content prior to posting/printing. Three members of the PR and Marketing team, across all areas of expertise, will review all content, with final sign off by a member of the management team. Manuscripts being submitted for publication to an academic journal should follow this style guide but do not require PR and Marketing approval.

## 9.2 Editorial Style |

### A

#### Abbreviations and Acronyms

##### Measurement abbreviations

Abbreviate measurements.

The patient needs 8 oz. of juice with medication.

##### State name abbreviations (See list below.)

In a text:

When the state name stands alone, write it out.

The patient is from Maryland.

When the state name is preceded by a city, use the abbreviation.

The patient is from Rockville, Md.

##### Organization name abbreviations

On first reference, follow the spelled-out name of an organization with its abbreviation or acronym noted between parentheses if the name will be mentioned in future references. You don't need to list abbreviations if they are not mentioned again.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) developed the guidelines.

**Exception:** For highly technical terms, write the known expression first and indicate immediately thereafter its technical root in parentheses. (See CT Scan, MRI, and PT Scan for examples.)

State Name	Abbrev.	PCA	State Name	Abbrev.	PCA	State Name	Abbrev.	PCA
Alabama	Ala.	AL	Kentucky	Ky.	KY	North Dakota	N.D.	ND
Alaska	None	AK	Louisiana	La.	LA	Ohio	None	OH
Arizona	Ariz.	AZ	Maine	None	ME	Oklahoma	Okla.	OK
Arkansas	Ark.	AR	Maryland	Md.	MD	Oregon	Ore.	OR
California	Calif.	CA	Massachusetts	Mass.	MA	Pennsylvania	Pa.	PA
Colorado	Colo.	CO	Michigan	Mich.	MI	Rhode Island	R.I.	RI
Connecticut	Conn.	CT	Minnesota	Minn.	MN	South Carolina	S.C.	SC
Delaware	Del.	DE	Mississippi	Miss.	MS	South Dakota	S.D.	SD
District of Columbia	DC	DC	Missouri	Mo.	MO	Tennessee	Tenn.	TN
Florida	Fla.	FL	Montana	Mont.	MT	Texas	None	TX
Georgia	Ga.	GA	Nebraska	Neb.	NE	Utah	None	UT
Hawaii	None	HI	Nevada	Nev.	NV	Vermont	Vt.	VT
Idaho	None	ID	New Hampshire	N.H.	NH	Virginia	Va.	VA
Illinois	Ill.	IL	New Jersey	N.J.	NJ	Washington	Wash.	WA
Indiana	Ind.	IN	New Mexico	N.M.	NM	West Virginia	W. Va.	WV
Iowa	None	IA	New York	N.Y.	NY	Wisconsin	Wis.	WI
Kansas	Kan.	KS	North Carolina	N.C.	NC	Wyoming	Wyo.	WY

## 9.3 Editorial Style |

### Address Format

Children’s National Health System  
Person’s Name  
Department Name  
111 Michigan Ave NW, #XXXX (room or suite number)  
Washington, DC 20010

### Age References

Always use a numeral when indicating an age.  
[The girl is 4 years old.](#)

If age is used as an adjective, use a hyphen when joining a numeral with other words to form a modifier:  
[The 4-year-old girl is here.](#)

The term “infant” refers to children between the ages of 0 and 12 months.

### Alumnus, alumni, alumna, alumnae

These terms all refer to people who have attended or graduated from a particular school, college, university, or training program.

The table below indicates which terms apply to women, to men, and to groups of people.

Woman	Women	Man	Men	Women and Men
alumna	alumnae	alumnus	alumni	alumni

[Kurt Newman, MD, is an alumnus of University of North Carolina.](#)

[Penny Glass, PhD, is an alumna of George Washington University.](#)

[More than 300 men and women—all George Washington University alumni—gathered for their 20-year reunion.](#)

### American Hospital Association

AHA on second reference

### Ampersand (&)

Do not use an ampersand to replace the word “and.”  
[The boys and girls gathered in the atrium.](#)

Use an ampersand only when it is part of a company’s formal name.  
[U.S.News & World Report](#)

### Atrium

When referring to the Atrium in the hospital, always capitalize the word.

## B

### Band-Aid

Because Band-Aid is a trademark, use the term “adhesive bandage” unless you really are referring to a Band-Aid bandage.

### Bulleted Lists

Use a colon at the end of the sentence that introduces a bulleted list.

Use round or square bullets, not dashes.

Capitalize the first word after each bullet.

Use the same verb tense or noun form for each bulleted item.

Unless a bulleted phrase is a sentence, do not use a period or a comma, even for the last item in the series.

Example:

Children with ASD benefit from our multidisciplinary team, which includes specialists in:

- Developmental/Clinical Psychology
- Neuropsychology
- Developmental Neuropsychology
- Psychiatry
- Speech and Language Pathology

## 9.4 Editorial Style |

### C

#### Caesarean section

Lower case the "c," unless it falls at the beginning of a sentence.

[The doctor performed an emergency caesarean section.](#)

Use the combined "ae" spelling, not "e" alone as in "cesarean."

#### Calls to action

Use the wording, "For more information, call 202-476-XXXX."

#### Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

CDC on second reference

#### Centers of Excellence

For administrative purposes, Children's groups its clinical work into Centers of Excellence. Capitalize the Centers of Excellence in proper names, but lowercase the word "center" when used alone.

We mostly refer to the centers internally, but we sometimes refer to them externally. The centers' official names follow:

[Center for Cancer and Blood Disorders](#)  
[Center for Heart, Lung, and Kidney Disease](#)  
[Center for Hospital-Based Specialties](#)  
[Center for Neurosciences and Behavioral Medicine](#)  
[Child Health Advocacy Institute](#)  
[Diana L. and Stephan A. Goldberg Center for Community Pediatric Health](#)  
[Joseph E. Robert, Jr., Center for Surgical Care](#)

The research centers' official names follow:

[Center for Genetic Medicine Research](#)  
[Sheikh Zayed Institute for Pediatric Surgical Innovation](#)  
[Center for Clinical and Translational Research](#)  
[Center for Cancer and Immunology Research](#)  
[Center for Neuroscience Research](#)

#### Children's National Health System

##### Using the name in internal and external publications

Children's National Health System (first reference in a text)  
Children's National (subsequent references in the same text)  
Children's (subsequent references in the possessive form)  
Incorrect: CNHS, CN, CNMC

Note: Should you choose to use "CNHS" on internal documents, make sure your audience understands that these abbreviations may not be used on external documents.

#### A multi-campus organization

You should describe Children's National as a "multi-campus organization."

Sheikh Zayed Campus (referring to the physical location on Michigan Avenue)

[Sheikh Zayed Campus for Advanced Children's Medicine](#) (first reference)

[Sheikh Zayed Campus](#) (subsequent references in the same text)

#### The

Do not use "The" in front of "Children's National Health System."

See Locations for more information.

#### Children's Research Institute

Serves as the academic arm of Children's National, and occupies the top floors of the main hospital.

Functions as a separate entity under Children's National corporate umbrella.

[Children's Research Institute \(CRI\) at Children's National](#) (first reference)

[CRI](#) (acceptable for subsequent references in the same text)

#### Commas

##### Serial comma

Always use a comma before the "and" or "or" in a series of three or more.

[Physicians from Neurology, Surgery, and Hematology](#) attended the meeting.

[The patient arrived complaining of symptoms resembling indigestion, a panic attack, or a heart attack.](#)

## 9.5 Editorial Style |

### City and state references

When you mention a city and its state together, place a comma between them. Commas with states come in pairs, so there should be a comma after the abbreviation as well.

Millions of tourists visit Washington, DC, each year.

### Co-morbidity

Spell with a hyphen.

### Conditions

Do not capitalize a condition unless its name includes a proper noun.

The 10-year-old boy has sickle cell disease.

When a condition's name includes a proper noun, capitalize only the proper noun.

The doctor diagnosed Hodgkin lymphoma.

Do not put the proper noun in the possessive form.

The amniocentesis showed Down syndrome.

### Credentials

Never use periods after "MD" or any other credential (e.g., "PhD", "RN", "MPH", etc.). If there is more than one, use commas before and after each.

Roger Packer, MD, is a neurologist.  
Denice Cora-Bramble, MD, MBA, trained as a pediatrician.

With the exception of "BSN" (Bachelor of Science in Nursing), do not include bachelor's degrees in credentials.

Always include a credential on first reference and "Dr." on following references.

Roger Packer, MD, is a neurologist. (first reference)  
Dr. Packer helps patients with brain tumors. (subsequent references in the same text)

Don't use "Dr" and "MD" in the same instance.

The following is incorrect:

Dr. Roger Packer, MD, is a neurologist.

See also Titles and Doctor

### CT Scan

CT scan (computerized tomography) on first reference in a text

CT scan for subsequent references

## D

### Days of the Week

Capitalize and spell out days of the week, except if space is a consideration when using them in a table.

### DC

Do not put periods after each letter.

Children's National Health System is based in Washington, DC.

Do not use DC alone; spell it out.

Children living in the District of Columbia have access to swimming pools in the summer.

Can use "District" on second reference.

### Department of Health and Human Services or Department of Health

Avoid acronyms and lowercase the "d" in "department" whenever it stands alone.

The Department of Health and Human Services issued physical activity guidelines.

The department recommends children participate in aerobic activity three times per week.

The DC Department of Health called for clean air regulation.

### Departments at Children's National

Capitalize non-clinical departments in proper names; lowercase them when they stand alone. (All clinical-related groups are divisions, programs, or clinics.)

Public Relations and Marketing Department

Engineering Department

The department

## 9.6 Editorial Style |

### Diabetes

Use the Arabic numeral for type 1 or 2.

Capitalize the word “type” only at the beginning of a sentence.

[Children with type 1 diabetes.](#)

[Type 1 diabetes affects millions of children.](#)

### Divisions

The Centers of Excellence are made up of clinical divisions. Capitalize clinical divisions in proper names; lowercase them when they stand alone or are used in a series.

[Division of Neurology](#)

[The division ...](#)

[The divisions of Neurology, Genetics, and Orthopaedic Surgery](#)

### Doctor

On first reference, mention a physician’s credentials with his or her name.

[Laurel Blakemore, MD](#)

On subsequent references in the same text, use his or her title.

[Dr. Blakemore](#)

Never use a physician’s credentials and title together.

[Dr. Laurel Blakemore, MD \(incorrect\)](#)

Reminder: Do not use periods in credentials (see Credentials, above). MA, MS, MSN, MD, PhD

## E

### east wing/west wing

Lowercase “east” and “west” when referencing them in construction and addition stories.

### East Inpatient Tower

Use uppercase letters as indicated.

### Emergency Department

Emergency Department (first reference)

[The Emergency Department triages patients upon arrival.](#)

ED (acceptable for subsequent references)

[Doing so ensures that the ED treats the most critical patients first.](#)

Never acceptable: Emergency Room or ER.

See Locations for more information.

### Email

Do not hyphenate “email” and lowercase the “e” unless it falls at the beginning of a sentence.

[He checked his email at lunch.](#)

[Emails flooded his inbox.](#)

## F

### Fewer, less

Use “fewer” for individual items; use “less” for bulk or a quantity or something you cannot count.

[Quantity: She had less than \\$50 in her wallet \(an amount/quantity\).](#)

[Countable: Fewer than 20 patients waited in the Emergency Department](#)

### Food and Drug Administration

FDA (second reference).

## H

### Healthcare

We use “healthcare.”

[Children’s National provides preeminent healthcare services.](#)

[Children’s National provides services to families who cannot pay for healthcare.](#)

## 9.7 Editorial Style |

### I

#### Institutes

Children's National has several institutes. They are:

[Sheikh Zayed Institute for Pediatric Surgical Innovation\\*](#)

[Obesity Institute](#)

[Gilbert Family Neurofibromatosis Institute](#)

[Brain Tumor Institute](#)

[Children's National Heart Institute](#)

[Urea Cycle Disorders Institute](#)

[Bear Institute](#)

Note: The Child Health Advocacy Institute is considered a center of excellence.

\* Always use the full name in first reference. Use "The Sheikh Zayed Institute" on second reference, and if the content is clear it is referring to this institute, use "the institute" (lowercase) throughout the rest of the publication. Never use the abbreviation "SZI".

#### Intensive Care Units

When referring to the group, use "critical care units" or "intensive care units."

[The critical care units at Children's National ensure patients receive the best care in the region.](#)

When referring to individual units, use the following guidelines:

[Cardiac Intensive Care Unit \(first reference\)](#)

[Cardiac ICU \(subsequent references\)- \(never CICU\)](#)

[Neuro Intensive Care Unit \(first reference\)](#)

[Neuro ICU \(not NICU\) \(subsequent references\)](#)

[Pediatric Intensive Care Unit \(first reference\)](#)

[PICU \(subsequent references\)](#)

[Neonatal Intensive Care Unit \(first reference\)](#)

[NICU \(subsequent references\)](#)

### L

#### Locations

Children's National has many locations for clinical services.

##### Main Campus

[Sheikh Zayed Campus for Advanced Children's Medicine \(first reference\)](#)

[Sheikh Zayed Campus \(subsequent references\)](#)

##### Outpatient Centers

Do not use the abbreviation "ROC" in any public materials.

The Regional Outpatient Centers are:

[Annapolis Outpatient Center](#)

[Laurel Outpatient Center](#)

[Upper Marlboro Outpatient Center](#)

[Frederick Outpatient Center](#)

[Montgomery County Outpatient Center](#)

[Children's National Imaging at the Montgomery County Outpatient Center](#)

[Northern Virginia Outpatient Center](#)

[Spring Valley Outpatient Center](#)

Note: Always refer to each center by listing its city/location first and then the words "Outpatient Center."

Refer to the group of centers as "Children's Regional Outpatient Centers."

##### Ambulatory Surgery Center

The Montgomery County Outpatient Center also has an Ambulatory Surgery Center with two operating rooms.

[Montgomery County Ambulatory Surgery Center \(first reference\)](#)

[ASC \(may be used for subsequent references\)](#)

## 9.8 Editorial Style |

### Affiliated Practices

Children's is affiliated with a private physician practice in Northern Virginia, Children's National Specialists of Northern Virginia, LLC. Procedures (not surgeries) are done at this practice.

Always refer to Children's National Specialists of Virginia, LLC, as a private physician practice.

[Children's National Specialists of Virginia, LLC](#)  
(first reference)

[Leave off the "LLC" \(for subsequent references only\)](#)

Note: All materials referring to this location must be approved by PR and Marketing, as most references may need legal review.

### Specialty Locations

Children's National has created a joint venture with Inova Health System. Pediatric Specialists of Virginia serves patients in Northern Virginia and has its own branding.

Children's has several locations where physicians have limited time, including some other hospitals and doctors' offices or complexes.

We refer internally to these locations as "pebbles," but this term should not be used externally.

Reference by mentioning their specialties and locations as follows:

[Children's Cardiology at Bayside Health Association](#)

[Children's Endocrinology at ABC Pediatrics](#)

Exception: A directory or other listing may mention the location first (e.g., GW: Children's Cardiology).

### Children's Health Centers

We refer collectively to our primary care health centers (located throughout the District of Columbia) as "Children's Health Centers."

Specific references combine "Children's Health Center" with "at," as follows:

[Children's Health Center at Good Hope Road](#)

[Children's Health Center at Martin Luther King, Jr., Ave.](#)

[Children's Health Center at Shaw](#)

[Children's Health Center at Adams Morgan](#)

[Children's Health Center at THEARC](#)

There also are:

[Children's Health Center at the Sheikh Zayed Campus](#)

[Adolescent Health Center at Children's Sheikh Zayed Campus](#) (first reference)

[Adolescent Health Center](#) (subsequent references)

### Mobile Units

Several mobile units provide care to children in the District of Columbia and Prince George's County.

Some provide medical care; one provides dental care.

[Children's Dental Mobile Unit](#) (both first and subsequent references)

[Children's Medical Mobile Unit](#) (both first and subsequent references)

### Children's Pediatricians & Associates

Children's National owns several affiliated pediatric practices that provide primary care throughout the region.

[Children's Pediatricians & Associates](#) (first reference)  
[CP&A](#) (subsequent references)

### Children's National Emergency Department at United Health System

Children's National operates a pediatric emergency department on the campus of United Health System in Southeast Washington, DC.

[Children's National Emergency Department at United Health System](#) (first reference)  
[Children's National ED at UMC](#) (acceptable subsequent reference)

### Extended Campuses

Children's also has non-clinical locations called extended campuses.

[Tech Hill Campus](#)

Refer to other locations by the street names.

[Roeder Road Campus](#)

## 9.9 Editorial Style |

### M

#### Modifiers/Hyphenated Words

Hyphenate compound modifiers to ensure clarity and prevent confusion.

Children's National Health System provides world-class care.

Never hyphenate words ending in "ly."

After the surgery, Anna had only a slightly bruised knee.

#### Months

Always capitalize the names of months.

Spell out the names of months when they are mentioned alone.

In January, the team traveled to Abu Dhabi.

Use abbreviations when referring to specific dates.

On Jan. 22, 2011, they toured the Masdar Institute.

Exceptions: March, April, May, June, July

#### MRI

MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) (first reference in a text)  
MRI (subsequent references)

#### Multidisciplinary

No hyphen

### N

#### National Institutes of Health

National Institutes of Health (first reference)

NIH (subsequent references)

#### Numbers

Spell out numbers from "one" through "nine."

The doctor saw eight patients this afternoon.

Use numerals for 10 and above.

The team worked hard to triage 32 patients.

Spell out numbers that start sentences.

Sixteen patients were reading magazines in the waiting room.

Exceptions: Always use numerals for millions, percentages, and ages.

3 million, 45 percent, 4 years old

### O

#### Orthopaedics

Never "Orthopedics."

The name of the division is Orthopaedics and Sports Medicine.

#### "Over" vs. "More Than"

"Over" refers to spatial relationships.

The helicopter flew over the hospital.

"More than" is preferred with numerals.

More than three people were involved in the accident.

### P

#### Periods

Place one space between a period and the beginning of the next sentence.

The nurse and doctor spoke to reporters. They explained how long it would take to recover.

#### Percent

Except in table headers, write out "percent."

Only 10 percent of the school's children caught the flu.

#### PET Scan

PET scan (positron emission tomography)  
(first reference in a text)

PET scan (subsequent references)

#### Phone Numbers

Use hyphens; do not use parentheses.

202-476-4500

## 9.10 Editorial Style |

### Prince George's County

Spell out the county name; do not write "PG County."

### Programs/Clinics

Specialty programs and clinics exist both within and across divisions.

To be listed as such, a specialty program or clinic must take appointments from patients.

Capitalize clinical programs in proper names; lowercase them when they stand alone.

[The Craniofacial Program](#)

[The program...](#)

## S

### Seasons

Lowercase the names of seasons unless they are part of a formal title.

[The First Lady read to patients last winter.](#)

[We issued the BearNet News Winter Edition last week.](#)

### States

See abbreviations

### Subsidiaries

Children's National has the following subsidiaries:

[Children's Hospital](#)

[Children's Hospital Foundation](#)

[Children's National Health Network](#)

[Children's National Specialists of Virginia, LLC](#)

[Children's Pediatricians & Associates \(CP&A\)](#)

[Children's Research Institute](#)

[Children's School Services](#)

[Safe Kids Worldwide](#)

## T

### Teen, Teenager, Teenaged

Do not use a hyphen after "teen."

### Their, There, They're

"Their" is a possessive pronoun.

[The doctors returned to their offices.](#)

Do not use "their" to refer to a single person.

[A parent should know his child's medical history.](#)

[Preferred: Parents should know their children's medical histories.](#)

Used as an adverb, "there" indicates direction.

[The patient went there for help.](#)

"There" can also be used as a "function word" to create impersonal constructions.

[There are many nurses at Children's National.](#)

[Preferred: Many nurses work at Children's National.](#)

[Preferred: Children's National Health System employs many nurses.](#)

"They're" is a contraction for "they are."

[They're going to evaluate the patient's symptoms.](#)

### Time

Use numerals and lowercased "am" and "pm" with no periods.

[4:30 pm, 9:00 am – 5:30 pm, 1 -2 pm](#)

### Titles

Capitalize titles on all references.

[Roger Packer, MD, Senior Vice President](#)

[Senior Vice President Roger Packer, MD](#)

## 9.11 Editorial Style |

### U

#### Uncompensated Care

Do not refer to “charity care.”

Use the term “uncompensated care.”

[We provide about \\$50 million in uncompensated care each year.](#)

Note: Never say we “give” that much or suggest that we are not reimbursed for any of that care.

#### United Arab Emirates

Do not abbreviate “United Arab Emirates.”

The capital is Abu Dhabi.

There are seven emirates:

[Abu Dhabi](#)

[Ras al-Khaimah](#)

[Ajman](#)

[Sharjah](#)

[Dubai](#)

[Umm al-Quwain](#)

[Fujairah](#)

Health Authority – Abu Dhabi (HAAD on second reference).

[The Sheikh Zayed Institute for Pediatric Surgical Innovation was made possible by a gift from the Government of Abu Dhabi on behalf of the people of the United Arab Emirates.](#)

### W

#### Websites

One word: write “website,” not “Web site.”

List websites without an underline

(ex. [www.ChildrensNational.org](#)).

If the website is hyperlinked within a document or online, it should be underlined or bolded so the reader knows it is a link

(ex.: [www.ChildrensNational.org](#)).

“http:” is generally not needed when listing a website.

Never use “check out” or “go to.”

Preferred: “For more information, visit [www.ChildrensNational.org](#).”

#### Wheelchair

One word, no hyphens.

#### Who, Whom

The pronoun “who” serves as a subject:

[The child who complained of a headache yesterday is feeling better.](#)

[Who is coming to the meeting?](#)

Use “who” to refer to people or to pets with a name (pets without a name are “it.”)

The pronoun “whom” serves as the object of a verb or preposition.

[The patient to whom the doctor was assigned had a headache.](#)

[Whom do you wish to see?](#)

### X

#### X-ray

Always capitalize the “X,” even when the word does not fall at the beginning of a sentence.

[The X-ray technician had excellent training.](#)