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Bulletin No. 7 March 4, 2013

State-Supplied Vaccines Now Available for All Children Aged 0–35 Months

Background

The recent dramatic reduction in federal funds for vaccine procurement in Alaska threatened the Alaska Immunization Program's ability to provide vaccines for underinsured and fully insured children in 2013.¹ Fortunately, in 2012, two separate initiatives resulted in state general funds for vaccine purchase: 1) the passage of House Bill 310 yielded \$4.3 million annually to purchase selected vaccines for underinsured children and underinsured/uninsured adults during 2013–2015, and 2) an annual increment in the Governor's Budget yielded \$700,000 for vaccine procurement.

In the Spring of 2012, the Immunization Program's budgetary projections for vaccine expenditures were based on a vaccine eligibility assessment tool provided by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). These projections indicated that the Immunization Program would need to use the Governor's Budget increment to help support the purchase of state-supplied vaccine for our highest priority groups – underinsured children and underinsured/uninsured adults.

Starting in July 2012, providers administering state-supplied vaccines were required to submit patient-level vaccine eligibility and administration data into VacTrAK. A review of these data from July–December 2012 indicated that fewer Alaska children are underinsured or fully insured than was previously estimated using CDC's assessment tool. Moreover, CDC subsequently applied a more precise method for projecting federal vaccine eligibility status for Alaska children, which substantiated the vaccine administration review findings. This information facilitated the development of a budget, utilizing the 2012 Governor's Budget funds, that enables universal vaccine procurement for all Alaska children aged 0 through 35 months, effective March 4, 2013.

New State-Supplied Vaccine Administration Guidelines²

- All children aged 0 through 35 months are now eligible to receive all state-supplied vaccines recommended by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) at any enrolled provider or facility.
- Some children aged 3 through 18 years are eligible to receive all state-supplied vaccines that are recommended by the ACIP at select facilities (Table).
- Providers may not deny eligible patients state-supplied vaccine due to an inability to pay administration fees.
- Parents are not required to provide proof of their child's eligibility status to receive state-supplied vaccines.
- Providers must document eligibility status for children of all ages at each visit prior to vaccine administration and then report administration data into VacTrAK.

Definitions

- *VFC-Underinsured* – children with health insurance that does not cover vaccines, covers only certain vaccines, or covers vaccines but has a fixed dollar limit or cap for vaccines (once the cap is reached, the child is then eligible to receive state-supplied vaccines). Children with unmet deductibles or co-pays do not meet the criteria for VFC-underinsured status. VFC-underinsured children may receive state-supplied vaccine at Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC) and FQHC-deputized facilities.²
- *State-Underinsured* – children with health insurance are eligible to receive state-supplied vaccine from any enrolled provider if, at the point of care, their parent/guardian states that 1) their child's insurance does not cover immunizations, 2) they don't know if their child's insurance covers immunizations, or 3) their child has not met his/her insurance deductible or copay.
- *"Ineligible" (i.e., fully insured)* – children with health insurance that do not meet one of the aforementioned eligibility criteria should be documented as *ineligible*. The following fully insured children are eligible to receive state-supplied vaccines: 1) children aged 0 through 35 months, and 2) children aged 3 through 18 years who are living in remote regions of Alaska and have no other access to vaccines except through Public Health Nursing services. (Note: the only children currently not eligible to receive state-supplied vaccines are fully insured children aged 3–18 years who don't meet the rural access criteria.)

More Information

- Through the month of March, the Immunization Program will offer weekly teleconferences to discuss vaccine eligibility at noon on Tuesdays. To participate in one of these sessions, call 1-800-944-8766 (passcode 18108).
- For additional information, call the Alaska Immunization Helpline at 269-8088 or 888-430-4321.
- The Alaska Division of Public Health is working with key stakeholders towards the future goal of developing a vaccine financing solution similar to Washington's dosage-based assessment model that would enable the provision of state-supplied vaccines for all children.

References

1. Section of Epidemiology *Bulletin*. "State Funding Increase Vaccines Distributed by Alaska Immunization Program." No. 8, May 22, 2012. Available at: http://www.epi.alaska.gov/bulletins/docs/b2012_08.pdf
2. *Alaska Vaccine Distribution Handbook*. Available at: <http://www.epi.alaska.gov/id/iz/vaxpacket/cert/VaccineHandbook.pdf>

Table. State-Supplied Pediatric Vaccine Eligibility, by Eligibility Status and Facility Type

Facility Type	VFC Eligible*			VFC Ineligible		
	Medicaid Eligible	American Indian/Alaska Native	Uninsured	VFC-Underinsured	State-Underinsured	"Ineligible" (i.e., Fully Insured)†
Public Health Center‡	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	0 through 35 months, and 3 through 18 years remote access
Tribal Health Center	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	0 through 35 months
Private Provider Office	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	0 through 35 months
FQHC	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	0 through 35 months
Deputized Facility	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	0 through 35 months

*The federal Vaccines for Children Program (VFC) provides all ACIP-recommended vaccines for children who are Medicaid eligible, American Indian/Alaska Native, and uninsured, as well as underinsured children seen at Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC), FQHC-deputized facilities, and Rural Health Clinics.

†Two groups of children in the "ineligible" category may receive state-supplied vaccines: 1) children aged 0 through 35 months, and 2) children aged 3 through 18 years who are living in remote regions of Alaska and have no other access to vaccines except through Public Health Nursing services.

‡Children receiving state-supplied vaccine at Public Health Centers may be charged for vaccine administration costs based on a sliding fee scale.