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GAVIN NEWSOM  
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TO: California Vaccines for Children (VFC) Program Providers

FROM: Sarah Royce, M.D., M.P.H., Chief   
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SUBJECT: Planning for the 2019-2020 VFC Flu Season

## BACKGROUND

Influenza vaccination is the best available protection for your patients 6 months and older each flu season. However, influenza vaccine ordering levels significantly lag behind vaccine ordering for other routine pediatric and adolescent vaccines. During this past influenza season (2018-2019), California Vaccines for Children (VFC) providers ordered less than optimal amounts of influenza vaccine, enough to protect just 33% of VFC-eligible patients in the state. Sadly, there were 10 reported influenza-associated pediatric deaths during the 2018-2019 season.

As we prepare to enter this upcoming influenza season, the California VFC Program would like to urge your practice to review and update your current influenza vaccination plans. The nine key strategies highlighted in this communication may assist your team in identifying additional tasks to enhance influenza vaccine administration in your practice, and help ensure your patients are protected this season.

### 1. SET VACCINATION GOALS

- Determine the overall number of patients needing flu vaccine doses this season. For VFC-eligible patients, this number should be based on the actual number of VFC-eligible patients in your practice.
- Review your clinic's influenza vaccination rates from the previous season, in comparison with vaccination rates of all other pediatric and adolescent vaccines given at your practice. Set incremental goals to increase the number of patients to be immunized this season.
- Given that children under 2 years of age and children with high-risk medical conditions are at an increased risk of complications from influenza, prioritize immunization goals for this group during the early part of the season to ensure you are protecting your most vulnerable patients.



- In order to support your practice's influenza vaccination efforts, VFC has provided each practice with "seasonal influenza vaccine administration targets," or estimates of the number of flu vaccine doses each practice will need to administer to VFC-eligible patients. Review these targets as you set your practice vaccination goals.

## **2. MONITOR YOUR PROGRESS**

- Determine how, and how frequent, you will monitor your progress toward vaccinating your patient population and meeting set vaccination goals.
- Share progress with clinic staff (via e-mail or as part of team huddles, or meetings) to keep clinic staff motivated and engaged throughout the season.

## **3. FREQUENTLY ASSESS YOUR VACCINE NEED**

- Assess your practice's influenza vaccine inventory levels weekly, or as you place routine vaccine orders, to make sure on-hand inventory meets your vaccine needs throughout the season.
- Determine your clinic's number of VFC Pre-booked/allocated doses remaining by checking your MYVFCVaccine account (after your initial VFC flu orders have shipped in full); proactively draw down from this amount throughout the season.

## **4. INFLUENZA USAGE AND TRACKING**

- In order to monitor your clinic's vaccination progress, as well as meet VFC vaccine accountability requirements, make sure that you have systems in place to track influenza vaccine administration. Utilize the Immunization Registry or your Electronic Health Record (EHR) to track usage and inventory. If you cannot track doses electronically, use the [VFC Flu Vaccine Usage Log](#).
- It is required that you submit influenza vaccine usage and as part of routine VFC vaccine ordering (whether or not flu vaccine doses are ordered) throughout influenza season.

## **5. ROUTINIZE FLU VACCINE ADMINISTRATION**

- Influenza vaccine is a routinely recommended vaccine. Therefore, recommend annual influenza vaccination in the same manner you recommend all other routine pediatric and adolescent vaccines. Taking a concurrent and presumptive approach may be helpful (e.g., "Today we will administer IPV, DTaP, and Flu.") This approach assumes that vaccines will be accepted, making influenza vaccine another routine vaccine rather than an "optional vaccine."
- Review and update, as appropriate, your practice's flu vaccine recommendations and messages, including how other clinic staff are discussing flu vaccine with patients, reminder messages (text /emails), and information on your clinic's phone system or website.

## **6. GET PRACTICE MEMBERS TO CHAMPION INFLUENZA VACCINATION**

- Empower clinic staff to become influenza vaccination champions. Each clinic team member serves a critical role in supporting influenza vaccination efforts in your practice.
- Identify a practice “flu champion” to help peers stay up-to-date with vaccine recommendations, create seasonal vaccination goals, track vaccine administration, and keep an overall culture of prevention throughout the season.

## **7. STAFF TRAINING AND PRACTICE**

- Review influenza vaccination schedules, product dosages, and administration with key staff. The annual VFC Program Influenza letter will include most of this information, and a summary of influenza vaccine recommendations recently published by the [CDC’s Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices \(ACIP\)](#).
- Practice, practice, practice! Practice in advance with clinic staff on issuing presumptive vaccine indication language, as well as responding to initial hesitancy or concerns about influenza vaccination. This prepares staff to respond to parents who may be seeking healthcare provider support or may need just a bit of additional information about influenza vaccination to alleviate concerns.

## **8. MAKE FLU VACCINE ACCESSIBLE**

- According to the Best Practices for Influenza Vaccination published by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), there are a number of strategies that can enhance the accessibility of flu vaccine to your patients this flu season. These include providing a Vaccine-only clinic or affording flexible appointment hours. Early morning or evening walk-in appointments are especially helpful at the beginning of the season, when demand is likely to be higher than mid-season).

## **9. REVIEW CLINIC WORKFLOWS FOR MAXIMUM IMPACT ON ENHANCING PATIENT VACCINATION**

- Children needing two doses of influenza vaccine should receive the second dose 30 days after the first. Making sure an appointment is set for this second dose BEFORE the child leaves the office increases the likelihood of on-time flu vaccine series completion.
- Decrease missed opportunities for influenza vaccination and make changes in your clinic flow so that every patient encounter is an opportunity to immunize. Review all patient charts prior to the start of each day to determine each patient’s vaccine need, including influenza vaccines.

## **REVIEW RESEOURCES**

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), CDPH, and AAP have a number of resources that can help your practice get valuable information as you prepare/enhance your vaccination plans for the season including:

- ✓ [CDC guidance for healthcare providers on how to make a strong flu vaccine recommendation.](#)
- ✓ [CDC Techniques: Talking to Parents about Vaccines.](#)
- ✓ [The Flu: A guide for parents, and key influenza information they should know.](#)
- ✓ [Flu Vaccine: Get the Facts, includes key facts that can support the flu team members as they have flu vaccine recommendation conversation with parents.](#)
- ✓ The Afternoon TEAch Webinar on [“How to Increase Influenza Vaccine Coverage in Your Clinic”](#) is now posted on EZIZ.org. We encourage your clinic team to view the webinar prior to the start of the influenza season.

### **QUESTIONS?**

If you have any questions, please call the VFC Customer Service Center at (877) 2GET-VFC or (877) 243-8832.

Enclosures:

Get Your Practice Ready Guide, 2019-2020