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TO: Vaccines for Children (VFC) Providers

FROM: Robert Schechter, MD, MSc., Chief, Immunization Branch *RS* *RS*
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Center for Infectious Diseases

SUBJECT: Resuming VFC Visits Virtually

BACKGROUND

Earlier this year, the Vaccines For Children (VFC) Program postponed all in-person site visits until further notice due to shelter-in-place restrictions, and to minimize the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on VFC practices. In light of the ongoing pandemic, and in order to comply with federal program requirements to assess provider compliance with program requirements and support providers in their vaccination efforts, the CDC has allowed for temporary allowance of alternative visit formats.

RESUMING PROVIDER VFC VISITS

Based on this allowance, the California Vaccines for Children Program will resume VFC visits virtually, in lieu of in-person visits. Virtual efforts will enable our program to provide required quality assurance, improvement, and support via a combination of virtual face-to-face meeting technology, as well as review of key program documentation completed ahead of a scheduled virtual meeting. Visits will be conducted primarily utilizing HIPAA-compliant web-based platforms such as Zoom and Webex.

The following link is to a brief survey for you to complete to help the VFC Program better understand and support your technical needs: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/GG729G9>. Your responses will help VFC Representatives prepare the right platform and resources to implement the virtual visits and allow you to successfully participate in the visit. Only one survey per PIN needs to be completed.

Preparing for Visits

Virtual visits include New Provider enrollment, Compliance visits, Storage and Handling visits, and Immunization Quality Improvement for Providers (IQIP) visits (currently known as Tele-IQIP). Logistics and details for each visit are listed below.

VFC Compliance visits

VFC Compliance visits are educational opportunities designed to improve compliance with VFC Program requirements. During compliance visits, VFC Representatives review fundamentals of vaccine storage and handling, management, and vaccine eligibility screening and



documentation. Knowledge and application of these fundamentals protects the integrity of the program as well as the provider's vaccines and patients.

When it is time for your routine VFC Compliance visit, your VFC Field Representative will be contacting you to schedule and explain the documentation that must be submitted before the scheduled visit. Failure to submit requirement documentation may necessitate rescheduling your visit and may impact your VFC account status. You are eligible for a VFC Compliance visit if you recently participated in a storage and handling contact.

Required documentation will include :

- VFC Temperature Logs for each vaccine refrigerator and freezer unit holding VFC vaccines
- Digital Data Logger (DDL) report(s)
- DDL calibration certificates for each vaccine storage unit
- Vaccine Management Plan
- Vaccine inventory

Storage and Handling visits

Storage and Handling visits are spot checks focusing on your storage and handling practices. These types of visits tend to be shorter than routine Compliance visits but cover similar topics for review. Similar to the Compliance visits, documents related to vaccine management will be required to be sent prior to the virtual visit. It is important to email all required documentation at the same time to ensure that your VFC Field Representative has adequate time to review the information. And as with Compliance Visits, failure to submit requirement documentation may necessitate rescheduling your visit and may impact your VFC account status. If you recently had a Compliance visit, you may still be chosen for a Storage and Handling visit.

Tele-IQIP

Immunization Quality Improvement for Providers (IQIP) activities currently known as Tele-IQIP will be conducted separately from any VFC compliance activities.

Deferral of routine immunizations during the COVID-19 pandemic has already affected more than one in six children due for immunization in California. More than ever, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recognizes the importance of maintaining immunization delivery services in the community. Reducing the risk of vaccine-preventable disease through vaccination can reduce stress on our already overburdened healthcare system. The IQIP strategies will address how to encourage patients back into the office to receive all vaccines recommended by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP). A recent [MMWR](#) report states that "...[R]eminding parents of the vital need to protect their children against serious vaccine-preventable diseases, even as the COVID-19 pandemic continues, is critical. As social distancing requirements are relaxed, children who are not protected by vaccines will be more vulnerable to diseases such as measles."

Notably, IQIP was designed to promote and support the implementation of provider-level quality improvement strategies. These IQIP strategies are designed to support VFC providers in identifying opportunities to increase vaccine uptake in adherence ACIP recommendations. These strategies also support Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) quality measures for Medi-Cal Managed Care Plans (MCPs), including [CIS](#) Combo 10 and [IMA](#) Combo 2.

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Questions?

For more details about VFC Compliance or Storage and Handling Visits, please contact your VFC Field Representative. Don't know who your VFC Field Representative is? Visit the EZIZ website, [EZIZ Calif VFC Field Representatives](#) to find the name and contact information of your representative.

For more details about IQIP, please visit the IQIP webpage [IQIP – California Vaccines for Children \(VFC\)](#) webpage on [EZIZ.org](#).
