

# ***SECTION 1 – INTRODUCTION***

The Vaccines for Children (VFC) Program was created as part of the Federal Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act, Section 1928 of the Social Security Act, in August 1993. The purpose of this program is to improve immunization levels across the United States by providing vaccines, at no cost, to enrolled public and private providers. The program is regulated by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) National Center of Immunizations and Respiratory Diseases (NCIRD). The VFC program is now operational in all 50 states and five territories, including American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.

Pennsylvania began its VFC program in October 1994 under the administration of the Department of Health (DOH), Division of Immunizations (DOI). VFC vaccines are purchased through CDC contracts by the DOH and are supplied to VFC-enrolled providers at no cost.

## **Patient Eligibility Screening**

Before administering a VFC vaccine to a child, the provider must question the child's parent or guardian to determine whether the child is eligible for VFC vaccine.

**Children birth through 18 years of age are eligible for VFC vaccines if they meet at least one of the following criteria:**

- Are enrolled in Medicaid; or
- Have no health insurance; or
- Are American Indian or Alaskan Native; or
- Underinsured: A child who has health insurance, but the coverage does not include vaccines; a child whose insurance covers only selected vaccines (VFC eligible for non-covered vaccines only). Underinsured

children are eligible to receive VFC vaccine only through a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC), or Rural Health Clinic (RHC) or under an approved deputization agreement\*

\* The formal extension of VFC authority through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to provide VFC vaccine to eligible underinsured children from a participating FQHC or RHC to another VFC-enrolled provider. Under this arrangement, the deputizing FQHC or RHC retains its full scope of authority as a VFC provider while extending the authority to deputized VFC providers to immunize underinsured children with VFC vaccine.

Children with health insurance that covers vaccines and do not meet one of the previously mentioned criteria are **not eligible** through the VFC program, even when the insurance requires a deductible.

There are no income restrictions imposed by the VFC program, as long as the child meets all other enrollment criteria.

## **Charges and Fees for Immunization of the VFC-Eligible Clients**

Providers bill according to CPT codes that are based on each vaccine (type of immunization) administered. Reimbursement through Medicaid varies by state. Some state Medicaid agencies reimburse a vaccine with multiple antigens at a higher rate than a single antigen vaccine. Some states limit the amount of administration fees reimbursed per visit. Please check with the state Medicaid agency to determine how the VFC administration fees are reimbursed. State Medicaid agencies cannot eliminate reimbursement of an administration fee because of how the vaccine is administered (i.e. injection versus orally administered). All Medical Assistance (MA) providers with billing questions should contact the MA provider inquiry number at 1-800-537-8862.

For non-Medicaid VFC eligible children (i.e., Alaska Natives/Native Americans, uninsured and underinsured), the administration fee is based on vaccine dose, **not the number of antigens** contained in a vaccine dose. The administration fee charged to a non-Medicaid VFC-eligible child cannot exceed the maximum regional charge (i.e. \$23.14 per vaccine), except in universal-purchase states (Pennsylvania is not a universal-purchase state), and then only if certain conditions are met. However, "The provider will not deny administration of a qualified

pediatric vaccine to a vaccine-eligible child due to the inability of the child's parents to pay an administration fee.” This requirement must be met by all VFC providers. Furthermore, the VFC legislation does not require providers to honor vaccine requests by VFC-eligible children who "walk-in" for immunizations only and are not established patients in their practice.

**No VFC eligible client may be refused administration of a vaccine due to an accompanying adult’s inability to pay an administration fee.**

### **Use of VFC Supplied Vaccines**

VFC supplied vaccines **may only be used for VFC eligible clients** (See Vaccine Borrowing, Section 4). The provider should ensure that department supplied vaccines are labeled as VFC or 317 funded vaccines and separated from privately purchased vaccines.

## Insured Children

Children whose health insurance covers the cost of vaccinations are not eligible for VFC vaccines even when a claim for the cost of the vaccine and its administration would be denied for payment by the insurance carrier because the plan's deductible (high deductible plan) had not been met. Covered benefits and VFC eligibility table follows:

<b>VFC eligibility scenario: Child is insured and.....</b>	<b>Insurance Status</b>	<b>Is child VFC Eligible</b>
Has not yet met plan's deductible	Insured	No
Plan covers all ACIP recommended vaccines but excludes certain products/combination vaccines	Insured	No
Plan covers only a portion of the vaccine cost and does not have Medicaid as secondary insurance	Insured	No
Has Medicaid as secondary insurance	Medicaid eligible	Yes
Plan covers only a portion of the vaccine cost and has Medicaid as secondary insurance	Medicaid eligible	Yes
Has not yet met plan's deductible and has Medicaid as secondary insurance	Medicaid eligible	Yes
Has exceeded plan's annually allowed number of provider visits or insurance doesn't cover vaccines	Underinsured – Only through FQHC/RHC	Yes
Cannot access health insurance due to being incarcerated	Uninsured	Yes

## **Provider Requirements**

Any physician, health care organization or medical practice licensed by the state of Pennsylvania to prescribe and administer vaccines may enroll as a provider in the Pennsylvania VFC program. Requirements for provider enrollment are simple, yet ensure accountability. The PA Vaccine for Children Program Provider Agreement (PA VFC PPA) (Section 6 – Forms) details physician eligibility requirements for participation in the VFC program and specific requirements for the provider to:

- Administer VFC program vaccines to VFC-eligible children.
- Retain all VFC documentation including Patient Eligibility Screening Records for a minimum of three years.
- Make immunization records available to the DOH, upon request.
- Comply with the appropriate immunization schedule, dosage and contraindications established by the CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP).
- Provide current Vaccine Information Statements (VIS) and maintain records in accordance with the National Childhood Vaccine Injury Act.
- Not impose a charge for the cost of the vaccine to any patient, to the DOH for any patient or to the Department of Public Welfare (DPW)/ Medical Assistance (MA) for any MA- enrolled child.
- Not impose a charge for the administration of the vaccine in any amount higher than the maximum fee of \$23.14.
- Not deny administration of a vaccine to a child due to the inability of the child's parent/guardian/individual of record to pay an administrative fee.
- Comply with VFC program procedures and requirements.

## **PA Statewide Immunization Information System (PA-SIIS)**

The PA Statewide Immunization Information System (PA-SIIS) is a statewide web-based registry that collects vaccine history information. PA-SIIS: 1)

provides a complete and accurate immunization history for new and existing patients; 2) assists with vaccine management; 3) produces immunization records for managed care, child care centers, schools and camps; and 4) electronically stores all required immunization data for VFC and the Health Care Effectiveness Data and Information Set (HEDIS). PA-SIIS is considered to be part of the medical record. All VFC Providers are encouraged to join PA-SIIS.