

May/June 2023

# Pennsylvania Immunization Program Newsletter

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## VACCINES FOR CHILDREN (VFC) PROGRAM

### VFC New Provider Enrollment

The PA VFC program continues to welcome new providers to the program. To streamline the enrollment process, the procedure is 100% online. Please visit the provider enrollment section of PA's [VFC webpage](#) to review the procedure. Providers must apply online to become a new VFC provider. Any applications or documents that are faxed or emailed will not be accepted or reviewed. For any questions regarding new provider enrollment, please visit the VFC webpage or contact: [RA-pavfc@pa.gov](mailto:RA-pavfc@pa.gov).

### VFC Program Correspondence

Providers are required to include their Provider Identification Number (PIN) on all correspondence and documents sent to the VFC Program.

- The PIN assigned to your site is a unique identifier and must be used for all communications.
- This includes voicemails and emails.

### Vaccine Returns

As a reminder, all vaccine return requests (except COVID vaccines) must be submitted using the electronic form available on the VFC website, Resources and Forms page: [VFC Resources \(pa.gov\)](#).

When completing a return request, the provider will be asked whether they want to receive UPS shipping labels via email. This option is only available to provider sites that already have established routine UPS service. Any provider sites that do not have routine UPS service should select 'No' to request a UPS pick-up. A UPS driver will come to the site with a shipping label to collect the vaccines.

Vaccine returns are managed at no cost to providers. Following the steps outlined above will ensure that providers do not accrue unnecessary charges when returning vaccines. Providers should also remember to check their demographic information in PA-SIIS. It is important that the site's shipping address be accurate at all times. This will guarantee that UPS drivers arrive at the proper locations. For any questions regarding vaccine returns, please contact: [ra-pavfc@pa.gov](mailto:ra-pavfc@pa.gov).

### Influenza Vaccine Expiration

The 2022-2023 influenza season is coming to a close. However, please remember that most influenza vaccine for this current season does not expire until June 30th. It is important to keep vaccines in your active inventory until the expiration date.

Once any unused influenza vaccine has passed its expiration date, please follow the appropriate vaccine accountability procedures.

- It is a PA VFC Program requirement that all unused, nonviable vaccine be accounted for and properly disposed of.
- All unopened vaccine that has expired must be returned to McKesson within six months after the expiration date.
- Unopened vaccine is defined as a pack of single dose vials or syringes with doses administered – the remaining doses are considered "unopened."

Almost all 2022-2023 influenza products offered through the PA VFC Program are single dose vials or syringes and therefore are returnable.

- For all returnable influenza vaccines, please complete the Spoiled/Expired Returnable Form.
- The return form, as well as the procedures and instructions, is also available on the VFC website, Resources and Forms page.

The only influenza products that may not be returnable are ones available in a multi-dose vial : **Fluzone Quadrivalent, NDC: 49281-0637-15 & Afluria Quadrivalent, NDC: 33332-0422-10.**

If the multi-pack is opened, the remaining doses must be wasted.

If the multi-pack has not been opened, the vaccine can be returned.

For influenza vaccines that are not returnable and need to be destroyed, complete the [Wasted/Destroyed Form](#)

Questions regarding influenza vaccine expiration, please contact [RA-pavfc@pa.gov](mailto:RA-pavfc@pa.gov).

### **Pre-Booking for Flu Vaccines**

The VFC Program has ordered influenza vaccine in preparation for the 2023-2024 influenza season. The influenza vaccine is for distribution to State Health Centers, County/Municipal Health Departments, Federally Qualified Health Centers, Rural Health Clinics, and private VFC providers. Ordering influenza vaccine will be done through an online form, which will be available to providers from June 1 through August 18. VFC staff will then enter the influenza order in PA-SIIS on behalf of each provider.

As with every influenza season, orders will be completed based on the supply of vaccine available and in the order in which online order forms are received. **Please be sure to review your organization's formulary and order only the vaccines on your formulary and in your EMR. Providers will only be able to submit their order form one time, so please make every effort to ensure accuracy.**

More information regarding the pre-book process, as well as the online order form was sent to all providers during the first week of June, please make sure to check your emails.

### **EcoFlex Coolers Return to the Vendor: Cold Chain Technologies**

Beginning Oct 12, 2022, McKesson began utilizing an improved reusable shipping solution for some of the refrigerated VFC vaccine shipments shipping out of Memphis, TN.

The new EcoFlex cooler will offer performance improvements and an opportunity to reduce waste. This upgrade has many benefits, including a better customer experience, a more durable and improved shipping solution, and reusable materials. This change also provides supply chain protection by re-using the shipper instead of requiring the production of a new shipper for every order. Initially, this will replace the current single-use large and then the extra-large Styrofoam shippers and may expand to other size shippers in the future.



The *Ecoflex Coolers* should be returned to the vendor: Cold Chain Technologies (CCT)

- Cold Chain Technologies has provided prepaid UPS return labels for your use.
  - The prepaid UPS return label will be included on the inner flap of each EcoFlex cooler shipped.
- Please return the coolers via UPS on their next delivery day.
  - You will not need to schedule a pick-up if CCT has a regular UPS delivery.
- Due to the increased cost of these solutions, the return of the cooler is critical to the success of this implementation.
  - Once received, CCT will inspect, clean, and refurbish for re-use.
- **DO NOT** call McKesson or UPS to schedule a pickup to return the Eco Coolers.
  - The boxes are not to be returned to McKesson; therefore, McKesson will not pay for customer pickups by UPS.

## PLEASE RETURN - DO NOT DISPOSE





**Step 1** - Open shipper and remove the top Koolit PCM gel pack(s).




**Step 2** - Remove the vaccine from the inner corrugated box.



**Step 3** - Ensure the inner corrugated box is back in the EcoFlex shipping system. **IMPORTANT - this will help prevent damage during return.**



**Step 4** - Place the top Koolit PCM gel pack(s) back on top. **IMPORTANT - this will help prevent damage during return.**



**Step 5** - Fold in the original outer flaps. Fold in the remaining flaps with return shipping label exposed. Tape seam.



**Step 6** - Give it to UPS to return for reuse.



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## ADOLESCENT IMMUNIZATION PROGRAM

### Meningococcal Disease

Meningococcal disease is a rare, but very serious bacterial illness. It can cause long-term problems, like loss of limbs or brain damage, and be deadly. Getting vaccinated is the best way to prevent meningococcal disease.

### Meningococcal bacteria spread from person to person

People spread the bacteria that cause meningococcal disease to others through respiratory droplets and throat secretions (saliva or spit). Generally, it takes close (kissing) or lengthy (living together) contact to spread them. Meningitis and bloodstream infection are common outcomes with meningococcal meningitis, the lining of the brain and spinal cord becomes infected and swells. Symptoms include sudden onset of fever, headache, and stiff neck.

There can be additional symptoms, such as:

- Nausea and vomiting
- Eyes being more sensitive to light
- Confusion

In babies, these symptoms can be difficult to notice or may not be there at all. Instead, a baby may appear slow or inactive, be irritable, vomit, or feed poorly. With a meningococcal bloodstream infection, the bacteria damage the walls of the blood vessels and cause bleeding into the skin and organs.

Symptoms include:

- Fever and chills
- Feeling tired
- Vomiting or diarrhea
- Cold hands and feet
- Severe aches or pain in the muscles, joints, chest, or belly
- Rapid breathing
- A dark purple rash

Seek medical care right away if you or your child has symptoms of meningococcal disease.

### Certain people are at increased risk

Anyone can get meningococcal disease, no matter their gender, age, race, ethnicity, or sexual orientation. However, in the United States, people of some ages have a higher risk than people of other ages:

- Babies
- Teens and young adults (16-to-23-year olds)
- Adults 65 years or older

**3 serogroups** cause most meningococcal disease:



**2 vaccines** provide protection:



Talk to a doctor about what vaccines are best for you or your child.



In addition, having certain medical conditions, going to college, or traveling to certain countries can increase someone's risk for getting this disease.

### **Meningococcal disease is very serious but treatable**

Meningococcal disease can be treated with antibiotics. It's important that treatment be started as soon as possible. Meningococcal disease can be deadly in a matter of hours.

### **CDC recommends vaccination for preteens, teens, and others**

There are two types of vaccines that help protect against meningococcal disease: MenACWY and MenB vaccines.

### **Preteens, teens, and young adults**

- Preteens should get 1 dose of MenACWY vaccine at 11 or 12 years old.
- Teens should get a MenACWY booster dose at 16 years old.
- Teens and young adults (16 through 23-year-olds) may also be vaccinated with a MenB vaccine, preferably when they are between 16 and 18 years old.

### **Vaccine side effects are usually mild**

Meningococcal vaccines are safe. Most people who get a meningococcal vaccine do not have any serious problems with it. Side effects are usually mild and go away on their own within a few days. Serious reactions are possible, but rare.

### **Vaccine Facts**

**FACT:** Meningococcal disease most often causes meningitis and blood infection.

**FACT:** One in 10 adolescents who get meningococcal disease will die and two in 10 will have serious long-term complications like hearing loss, brain damage, kidney damage, and limb amputations.

**FACT:** Early symptoms of meningococcal disease may look like a mild illness, but the infection can progress rapidly, killing an otherwise healthy adolescent in 24-48 hours.

**FACT:** The meningococcal vaccine recommended for all adolescents at age 11-12 years and again at age 16 years protects against four types of meningococcal bacteria (A, C, W, and Y).

**FACT:** The serogroup B meningococcal vaccine is recommended for adolescents with certain risk conditions and those living in an area or on a campus experiencing a serogroup B meningococcal disease outbreak.

**FACT:** Meningococcal serogroup B vaccine may be given to adolescents and young adults age 16-23 years, with a preferred age of 16-18 years.

### **Resources**

- ACIP Recommendations
  - [Use of Serogroup B Meningococcal Vaccines in Adolescents and Young Adults](#)
  - [Use of Serogroup B Meningococcal Vaccines in Persons Aged ≥10 Years at Increased Risk](#)
- Package Inserts: [Bexsero<sup>®</sup>](#), [Trumenba<sup>®</sup>](#)
- For Parents of Teenagers: [Information about Meningococcal Vaccination](#)

## COVID-19 VACCINE PROGRAM

### VRBPAC Meeting

On June 15, 2023, FDA's Vaccines and Related Biological Products Advisory Committee (VRBPAC) met to discuss strain selection for updated COVID-19 vaccines.

- Based on the totality of the evidence presented, FDA advised manufacturers to develop updated COVID-19 vaccines with a monovalent XBB.1.5 composition.
- Anticipate updated vaccine doses will be broadly available in the fall.
- Following updated vaccine authorizations, ACIP will review evidence to inform updated recommendations.

<https://www.fda.gov/vaccines-blood-biologics/updated-covid-19-vaccines-use-united-states-beginning-fall-2023>

### Planning for Fall 2023

- COVID-19 vaccines and treatments will likely transition to the commercial marketplace in fall 2023.
- CDC continues to partner closely with state, local, and interagency partners toward continued successful distribution of COVID-19 vaccines and treatments during this time, including clarification of processes for ordering, shipping and distribution.
- Guidance for partners will be published in summer 2023, prior to the transition to the commercial marketplace.
- Most Americans will continue to pay nothing out-of-pocket for COVID-19 vaccine due to insurance coverage.
- The **Bridge to Access Program for COVID-19 Vaccines and Treatment** is a public-private partnership which serves as a temporary measure to prevent the loss of under- and uninsured adults' access to COVID-19 vaccines and treatments at no-cost after commercialization.
- More information about this program will be made available in coming days to all our provider partners.

### Ancillary Supply Kit Equipment and Expiration Dates

The COVID-19 vaccine ancillary kit contents do NOT expire on the same date. Do not discard the entire kit based on the date printed on the label as it does not apply to all the contents of the kit.

- The expiration date for masks and face shields is indicated on the ancillary supply kit label.
- The expiration dates for other supplies (needles, syringes, alcohol prep pads, etc.) are printed on the individual packaging. The expiration date printed on the kit's label does NOT apply to supplies with an expiration date printed on the individual item packaging.

Reminder: Check the expiration date BEFORE using any medical equipment. NEVER USE EXPIRED EQUIPMENT. Always discard expired items according to state and local regulations.

### Vaccine Medical Trainings

- **Pfizer** vaccine training webinars have transitioned from live events to ON DEMAND content for all healthcare providers: <https://www.pfizermedicalinformation.com/en-us/medical-updates>
- **Moderna** has educational resources available on their website: <https://eua.modernatx.com/covid19vaccine-eua/providers/resources>.
- **Novavax** offers webinars each Wednesday at 12:00 p.m. ET: <https://novavax.com/officehours>

**COVID-19 Vaccines Currently Available in PA-SIIS**

Brand	NDC	Description	Minimum order quantity
Pfizer	59267-0304-02	COVID19-PFR-BV PFR 12+ BIVALENT (increment 180)	180
Pfizer	59267-1404-02	COVID19-PFR-BV PFR-SDV BVAL 12+ (order qty 50 only)	50
Pfizer	59267-0565-02	COV19-PFR-P-BV PFR-P BIVALENT 5-11 (increment 100)	100
Pfizer	59267-0609-02	COV19-PFR-L5-BV PFR L5 BIVALENT (increment 100)	100
Moderna	80777-0282-99	COVID19-MOD-B MOD 18+ BIVALENT (increment 100)	100
Moderna	80777-0283-99	COV19-MOD-L6-BV MOD L6 BIVALENT (increment 20)	20
Novavax	80631-1012-01	COVID-19 (Novavax); MDV5; 10-pack	100

**Resources**

Vaccine Expiry Website Tool: <https://lotexpiry.cvdvaccine.com/>

CDC Interim Clinical Considerations for Use of COVID-19 Vaccines: <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/clinical-considerations/covid-19-vaccines-us.html>

List of vaccine safety monitoring tools :[Ensuring COVID-19 Vaccine Safety in the US | CDC](#)

[Vaccine Effectiveness Studies | CDC](#)

[Stay Up to Date with COVID-19 Vaccines Including Boosters | CDC](#)

[COVID-19 Vaccination Clinical and Professional Resources | CDC](#)

[Syndicate Credible Health Content | CDC](#)

[COVID-19 Vaccine Confidence | CDC](#)

[How to Tailor COVID-19 Vaccine Information to Your Specific Audience | CDC](#)

[ACIP June 21-23, 2023 Presentation Slides | Immunization Practices | CDC](#)



## MPOX VACCINE PROGRAM

### State of the Outbreak

New Mpox cases remain on a downward trend across the Commonwealth, including in Philadelphia. As of the date of this newsletter, the last new Mpox case in PA was in Philadelphia the last week of April 2023. There has been a total of 866 cases in PA, with 554 cases in Philadelphia and 312 across the rest of the state. As of May 28<sup>th</sup>, a total of 16,205 doses of JYNNEOS have been administered; 61% of which are first doses and 39% are second doses. This means the Commonwealth still has a long way to go in its response to the Mpox outbreak as more than 70% of those [most at-risk in PA](#) still do not have their first dose, and of those with at least one dose, half are fully vaccinated. Per the CDC, receiving the full 2-dose series increases protection against Mpox greatly, as demonstrated in this MMWR from [October 2022](#) and these two MMWRs from May 2023, [here](#) & [here](#).

Around the country there have been sporadic cases throughout 2023. According to the CDC, from mid-March through May 25<sup>th</sup>, 2023, a cluster of Mpox cases have been identified, with a total of 29 confirmed cases reported to the Chicago Department of Public Health. All cases were among symptomatic men. None of the patients have been hospitalized. In response to this cluster of cases in Chicago, Health Alert Network (HAN) messages regarding the Potential Risk for New Mpox Cases were released by [CDC on May 15, 2023](#) and by [PADOH on May 17, 2023](#).

### Preparing for potential increase in Mpox Cases

Based on the Commonwealth's vaccination rates and the cluster of cases seen in Chicago, the CDC's recent epidemiologic modeling of the nation's risk for [Mpox Case Resurgence](#) puts Pennsylvania at a greater than 35% risk for resurgence in Mpox cases. In preparation for potential increases, DOH began prepositioning Mpox test kits around the state in April 2023 with some of our HIV/STD partner providers who serve many of those most at-risk.

### Ordering JYNNEOS

All order requests for JYNNEOS should continue to be submitted to DOH via the [PADOH MPOX Vaccine Supply Request Form](#). Providers may submit JYNNEOS requests any day or time, but DOH only submits orders to the Strategic National Stockpile (SNS) on Wednesday. However, the cutoff for weekly processing is Mondays at 11:59pm to allow time for review and processing. Orders received after the cutoff will be included in the following week's order. Distribution of the vaccine occurs through direct-to-site shipping from the SNS, with vaccine typically arriving at Provider sites within 24-48 hours.

### MPOX Vaccine locator

If your organization hasn't already done so, DOH encourages providers that offer the Mpox Vaccine to add their location to the [MPOX Vaccine Locator](#). **For Providers that are not listed on the locator:**

- *Step 1: Organizations that offer Mpox Vaccine but do not appear on the Mpox Vaccine Locator Widget can submit their information to [npin.cdc.gov/organization/submit](https://npin.cdc.gov/organization/submit)*

- *Step 2: Add the widget to your website by getting the embed code from [www.cdc.gov/poxvirus/mpox/vaccines/](http://www.cdc.gov/poxvirus/mpox/vaccines/) and clicking on “Embed” on the widget. Here is the code just in case:*

```
<div data-cdc-widget="DynWidgets" data-component-name="MpoxLocator"></div>  
<script src="//tools.cdc.gov/1M1B"></script>
```

### **JYNNEOS Route of Administration Updates**

JYNNEOS vaccine is licensed in the U.S. for subcutaneous administration in individuals 18 years of age and older. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) issued an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) in August 2022 to also allow for use of JYNNEOS vaccine:

- By subcutaneous injection for prevention of mpox disease in individuals younger than 18 years of age
- By intradermal injection for prevention of mpox disease in individuals 18 years of age and older

Intradermal administration (ID) is a recommended route of administration by the Commonwealth as it does afford extended supply of the JYNNEOS vaccine. However, Subcutaneous administration is considered the CDC’s standard regimen for administering JYNNEOS and is supported by DOH.

If a patient presents for their second JYNNEOS vaccine and had an erythema or induration at the site of the first dose, or requests it, then the second dose should be administered intradermally in the contralateral forearm, deltoid, or upper back below the scapula.

Providers are encouraged to have a discussion with the patient regarding the potential routes of administration, especially if the patient expresses concern of stigma or a history of keloid scarring.

Please see the [CDC’s Interim Considerations for Vaccine Administration](#) for more information.

### **Resources**

[Information For Healthcare Professionals | Mpox | Poxvirus | CDC](#)

[Clinician FAQs | Mpox | Poxvirus | CDC](#)

[Mpox Cases Among Cisgender Women and Pregnant Persons — United States, May 11–November 7, 2022 | MMWR \(cdc.gov\)](#)

[Epidemiology of Human Mpox — Worldwide, 2018–2021 | MMWR \(cdc.gov\)](#)

[Federal Resources About Mpox | HIV.gov](#)

[Mpox Message for 2023: Integrating Mpox Messaging Into Our HIV Response | HIV.gov](#)

[Clinical Quick Reference | Mpox | Poxvirus | CDC](#)

## BEST PRACTICE REFRESHER

### Understanding Standing Order for Administering Vaccines

Standing orders authorize nurses, pharmacists, and other appropriately trained healthcare personnel, where allowed by state law, to assess a patient's immunization status and administer vaccinations according to a protocol approved by a medical director in a healthcare setting, a physician, or another authorized practitioner. Standing orders work by enabling assessment and vaccination of the patient without the need for clinician examination or direct order from the attending provider at the time of the interaction. Standing orders can be established for the administration of one or more specific vaccines to a broad or narrow set of patients in healthcare settings such as clinics, hospitals, pharmacies, and long-term care facilities.

### Elements of a Standing Order

A comprehensive standing order should include the following elements:

1. Who is targeted to receive the vaccine;
2. How to determine if a patient needs or should receive a particular vaccination (e.g., indications, contraindications, and precautions);
3. Procedures for administering the vaccine (e.g., vaccine name, schedule for vaccination, appropriate needle size, vaccine dosage, route of administration);
4. Provision of any federally required information (e.g., Vaccine Information Statement);
5. How to document vaccination in the patient record;
6. A protocol for the management of any medical emergency related to the administration of the vaccine; and
7. How to report possible adverse events occurring after vaccination.

### Documentation and Renewal of Standing Order

Signed standing orders should be kept with all other signed medical procedures and protocols that are operational in one's clinic setting. A copy should also be readily available for clinic staff who operate under those standing orders.

Generally, standing orders will include an implementation date as well as an expiration date.

Periodic review of standing orders is important because vaccine recommendations may change over time.

### Resources

[Vaccine Standing Orders for Healthcare Providers \(immunize.org\)](https://immunize.org)

[Steps to Implementing Standing Orders for Immunization in Your Practice Setting \(immunize.org\)](https://immunize.org)

[Developing Standing Orders to Help Your Team Work to the Highest Level | AAFP](https://www.aafp.org)

## PENNSYLVANIA IMMUNIZATION CONFERENCE

The 27<sup>th</sup> annual statewide Pennsylvania Immunization Conference (PIC 2023) was held on Thursday, June 15, 2023, at the Hershey Lodge, Hershey, PA. It brought together over 450 in-person and virtual immunization providers, partners, and stakeholders to share information, discuss current issues, and recommend strategies to improve immunization rates in Pennsylvania.

### 2023 Pennsylvania Immunization Champion Awardees

During PIC 2023, five (5) selected candidates were awarded four Pennsylvania Immunization Champion Awards for their exemplary work in enhancing vaccinations.

#### **The PA Immunization Champion Award Criteria:**

- The PA Immunization Champion Award is intended to recognize individuals and/or teams who are working at the local level in Pennsylvania.
- It honors those who are doing an exemplary job or going above and beyond to promote or foster immunizations and create systems to enhance vaccine administration to improve overall vaccination rates across the lifespan.

#### **The four (4) Categories of PA Immunization Champion Awards:**

1. **Leadership Award:** The candidate/team is considered an authority on immunization in his or her school, medical system, or individual practice. Activities may include acting as a spokesperson, trainer, mentor, or educator.
2. **Collaboration Award:** The candidate/team has worked to build support for and increase immunization rates across the lifespan. Activities may include establishing or strengthening partnerships, coalitions, committees, working groups, or other.
3. **Innovation Award:** The candidate/team has used creative or innovative strategies to promote immunization or address challenges to immunization in their school, community, state, or region. Activities may include both new strategies and adapting existing strategies in new ways, such as reaching under-immunized populations.
4. **Advocacy Award:** The candidate/team is active in advancing policies and best practices to support immunizations in their community, region, or state. The candidate cannot be involved in advocacy activities that are related to funding for immunizations.

The 2023 PA's Immunization Champion Awardees include:

1. **Leadership Award:** Chichi Ilonzo Momah, PharmD, Springfield Pharmacy
2. **Collaboration Award:** Alan Wirt, PhD, MPH and Brittney Fuhrman, MPH, Emergency Health Services Federation
3. **Innovation Award:** Crystal Perez, MSN, RN, CSN, Allentown School District
4. **Advocacy Award:** Beth Ann Gagge, BSN, RN, CEN, Lehigh Valley Health Network & Lehigh Valley Physician Group

#### **Leadership Award: Dr. Chichi Momah, PharmD**

On numerous occasions, Chichi Momah, PharmD, a leader in her community, has traded her white coat for a superhero costume to help children feel more comfortable receiving vaccinations.

A community pharmacist and CEO at Springfield Pharmacy a member of the Pennsylvania Pharmacists Care Network (PPCN) and Flip the Pharmacy, located in Delaware county, where there was no county health department during the

until after the COVID pandemic, Chichi serves as a good example of what independent pharmacy owners can accomplish in challenging times. As a leader and innovator, she has created large scale vaccine clinics as well as kept the pharmacy open at all times. Despite staffing issues, drug supply issues, red tape, and vaccine hesitancy, Chichi has gone above and beyond for her patients, community, and profession.

More than 50,000 COVID-19 vaccines have been administered by Chichi and her “army of volunteers” through community COVID-19 vaccination clinics and themed events like carnivals. To ensure all students were vaccinated against COVID-19, Dr. Momah began working with all 15 school districts and the Intermediate Unit in Delaware County in early 2021. Through her advocacy and persistent efforts, she became the first pharmacy Vaccines for Children provider in the Commonwealth by partnering with the PA Department of Health, Division of Immunizations, and Vaccines for Children (VFC) Program. To allow the children to return to school in the fall of 2021, she obtained the vaccines required. She takes her role as a health care provider very seriously, having been a parent and community member.

As Chichi famously told NBC Nightly News, “I don’t take no for an answer.”

**Collaboration Award: Alan Wirt, PhD, MPH and Brittney Fuhrman, MPH**

As part of their shared organizational missions, priorities, and outcomes, Alan Wirt, PhD, MPH and Brittney Fuhrman, MPH understand and practice the importance of true collaboration. To improve immunizations and decrease the number of vaccine-preventable diseases, Mr. Wirt and Ms. Fuhrman identified the need to work together with a community group. In order to accomplish this, they led and initiated a new immunization coalition that covers nine (9) counties in south central Pennsylvania. In order to form this new coalition, Mr. Wirt and Ms. Fuhrman have engaged and collaborated with both traditional and non-traditional immunization partners. With no funding, they have conducted meetings, developed plans, conducted educational outreach, and held mass vaccination clinics, mobile vaccine services, and homebound vaccine services.

A public health specialist with the Emergency Health Services Federation, Mr. Wirt also supervises medical countermeasures at the South-Central PA Medical Reserve Corps (SCPA MRC), and chairs the steering committee for the South-Central PA Immunization Coalition. SC PA MRC is led by Ms. Fuhrman. They have worked together for the past three (3) years to make a positive impact in the nine (9) county region of South-Central PA, especially raising awareness about vaccinations and reducing vaccine-preventable diseases.

In addition to working with the Emergency Management Agencies in each of the nine counties, the SCPA MRC has conducted extensive outreach to the community by collaborating with local providers, food banks, area agencies on aging, YMCAs, United Ways of PA, Pennsylvania Departments of Health, colleges and universities, health systems, pharmacies, and others in the community. Currently comprised of close to 150 health care professionals and vaccine champions, South-Central PA Immunization Coalition is off to a great start.

As the South-Central PA Immunization Coalition reaches its full potential to impact vaccination rates, equity access to care, and vaccine education, the sky is the limit in terms of what this passionate group can accomplish in the future. They look forward to collaborating in new ways in the future.

**Innovation Award: Crystal Perez, MSN, RN, CSN**

A driving force of innovation in school immunizations, Crystal Perez, MSN, RN, CSN advocates for immunizing children in the classroom instead of excluding them for lack of vaccines or improperly executing exemptions in compliance with SILR.

As Assistant Director of Health Services for Allentown School District, she manages five (5) Vaccines for Children (VFC) Program sites in schools, capturing elementary to high schools.

A lot of barriers had to be overcome in order to succeed in this project. During her research, Crystal teamed up with the School Nurse Association to form a multidisciplinary team. The Allentown Health Department helped with the acquisition of equipment. She documented her educational needs assessment of school nurses' vaccine knowledge and assessed improvement after the education. The obstacle wasn't just funding and administration; she also had to get parental support. As a result of Crystal's efforts, in-school immunization clinics were supported by parental consent, vaccine information sheets for parental review, vaccine administration records, and post-vaccination care instructions.

During the first five (5) days of school, 862 students were excluded. By March 31, 2023, only 12 students were excluded from school for not meeting SILR requirements. Through the VFC Program at all five Allentown schools, 1070 doses of vaccine have been administered throughout the district.

The innovative expansion of the five (5) in-school VFC Program sites has allowed Ms. Perez to make great progress toward achieving 100% vaccination rates.

**Advocate Award: Beth Ann Gagge, BSN, RN, CEN**

For decades, Beth Ann Gagge, BSN, RN, CEN, has implemented best practices to incorporate immunizations across generations to prevent disease.

For the past 15 years, Ms. Gagge has worked in Infectious Disease, Travel Medicine, and Clinical Educator at Lehigh Valley Health Network (LVHN). She now works in outpatient services supporting the Emergency Department, Urgent Care Center, and physician provider groups (LVPG). She is responsible for vaccine management, education, and compliance with all CDC requirements applicable to the Vaccines for Children Program (VFC) and private vaccines; she is a trainer, mentor, and educator.



Please join us in recognizing and congratulating these immunization providers and partners for their exemplary work in enhancing vaccinations in Pennsylvania.

**Upcoming VFC New Provider Training Webinars:**

The Division of Immunizations (DOI) offers monthly webinars, every 3rd Thursday from 12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m., to introduce new providers to the Vaccines for Children (VFC) Program. These webinars will give providers the opportunity to learn about the requirements of the program and ask questions.

The main purpose of the webinars will be to educate providers who have recently completed an application to become a new VFC Provider or have expressed interest in becoming a provider.

- As a site who recently applied to become a provider, the designated primary and back-up vaccine coordinators are required to attend this webinar.
- However, current providers with new and existing staff who want to refresh themselves on the program requirements are welcome to attend as well.
- Both coordinators must register and be present for the entire webinar for their attendance to count.
- Once attendance for both the primary and back-up vaccine coordinators has been verified, the application can move forward, and the site will be contacted to schedule an enrollment visit.

Upcoming VFC New Provider Training Webinars, with registration links, Include:

1. Thursday, July 20th, 12:00 – 1:00 p.m.: Registration Link:  
<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/1466190387816809055>
2. Thursday, August 17th, 12:00 – 1:00 p.m., Registration Link:  
<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/6639011065968061274>

Questions regarding upcoming VFC New Provider Training Webinars, please contact [ra-pavfc@pa.gov](mailto:ra-pavfc@pa.gov).

**CONTACT US**

For all general concerns and questions please call our main line at **888-646-6864**. For program specific inquiries, you can also send us an email to the following resource accounts:

**VFC:** [ra-pavfc@pa.gov](mailto:ra-pavfc@pa.gov)

**Adolescent & Adult:** [ra-dhimmunize@pa.gov](mailto:ra-dhimmunize@pa.gov)

**COVID:** [ra-dhccovidvax@pa.gov](mailto:ra-dhccovidvax@pa.gov)

**Mpox:** [ra-dhmpox\\_vax@pa.gov](mailto:ra-dhmpox_vax@pa.gov)

**PA-SIIS (general inquiries):** [ra-dhpasiis@pa.gov](mailto:ra-dhpasiis@pa.gov)

**GET INVOLVED**

Check out (WHA) [World Hepatitis Day](#) website to help make sure the world knows that Hepatitis Can't Wait.

The WHA has customizable [campaign resources](#) in a variety of languages, and ideas for ways you and your organization can get involved.

Follow [@cdchep](#) on Twitter for more information about all types of viral hepatitis, and use #WorldHepatitisDay to join the conversation and spread the word.

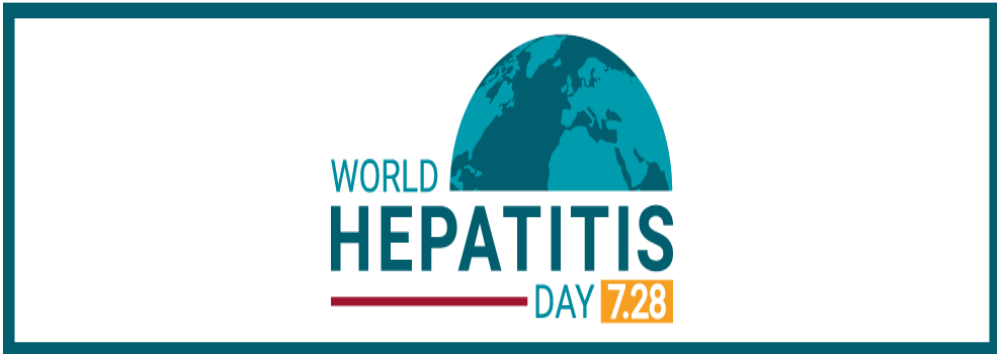
[Do you qualify for the Hepatitis B Birth Dose Honor Roll?](#)



**Hepatitis B Birth Dose Honor Roll**

[\\* learn more \\*](#)

[Prevention of Hepatitis B Virus Infection in the United States:: Recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices \(cdc.gov\)](#)



World Hepatitis Day – 28 July  
worldhepatitisday.org



### Give birth to the end of Hep B

Protect newborns - Administer hepatitis B vaccine at birth

The Immunization Action Coalition (IAC) is urging hospitals and birthing centers to meet the national standard of care by providing a universal birth dose of hepatitis B vaccine.



It prevents mother-to-infant transmission  
Prevents 70%–95% of transmission to infants born to HBsAg-positive women



It prevents household transmission  
Protects infants from infected family members and other caregivers



It provides protection if medical errors occur  
Provides a safety net to prevent perinatal transmission when medical errors occur