

**Bull's Eye Award Justification: Tennessee Immunization Program
Pandemic Influenza Vaccine Pre-Registration of Private Providers**

Background Description

When a pandemic influenza virus emerged in the late spring of 2009, a decision was made to produce a vaccine against it. The United States government contracted to purchase all the vaccine for the U.S. market and provide it at no cost. All doses would be allocated to state public health authorities who would direct distribution to designated recipients. In most states, immunization programs were tasked with vaccine distribution.

It was clear that immunization programs could not wait to begin their work even though critical federal decisions had not been made about how the distribution and vaccination program would work. It also was clear that private sector immunizers would have to be engaged, in addition to public health, to vaccinate the population as swiftly as needed. Tennessee quickly focused on a major challenge: given the unknowns, how do we move swiftly to identify and engage all of the private sector immunization providers who can provide this vaccine?

Goal/major purpose

The primary purpose of the Tennessee Immunization Program (TIP) Pandemic Influenza Vaccine Provider Pre-Registration project was to identify and engage private sector immunizers unknown to TIP (i.e., not in the Vaccines for Children Program) who wanted to receive pandemic vaccine. TIP developed a free, no-obligation online registration process open to all authorized users of the state's immunization registry: Tennessee Web Immunization System (TWIS). TWIS users could register for information and for the opportunity to order vaccine. To meet TIP's secondary objective of increasing the use of TWIS, interested non-TWIS users first had to enroll in TWIS before completing vaccine pre-registration.

Target population

The initiative's target population included all licensed healthcare providers authorized to administer vaccines and interested in providing the 2009 H1N1 pandemic influenza vaccine.

Annual budget and funding sources

TIP's federal immunization grant funded this project. The TWIS contractor (via an existing GSA contract) modified TWIS to create the online pre-registration and enhanced help desk support through December 2009. Costs were estimated at \$37,000, not including TIP staff.

Timing

The strategy was conceived on July 1; the website went live on August 5, 2009.

Pre-registration is ongoing at this writing.

Justification/Innovation

Tennessee's Pandemic Influenza Vaccine Pre-Registration project was the first of its kind in the nation to answer the challenges of quickly identifying and engaging possible private sector pandemic vaccine providers. With distribution projected to begin in October 2009, this project was completed in just 5 weeks, using TIP's available assets: TWIS and its contractors and TIP staff who programmed, tested and launched the system on an extraordinary timeline. Once live, availability was posted on the Department of Health website and communicated through all available email lists of licensed healthcare providers and through all state health professional organizations, followed by a letter to Tennessee's licensed physicians.

Certain innovative features contribute to its success: (1) free, no obligation registration removes barriers to interested providers; (2) capturing data necessary to create a provider profile in VacMan at registration allows TIP to upload the data directly into VacMan, eliminating data

entry by clerical staff; (3) sending weekly updates via email and/or blast fax has maintained provider interest and facilitated their planning; (4) requiring providers to be authorized TWIS users increases the likelihood that they will use TWIS to record immunizations – it also subjects them to established screening processes to prevent inappropriate recipients from receiving vaccine; (5) sending a weekly update of pre-registered providers to local and regional public health planners helps them identify the interested private sector vaccinators in their area and reach out to important providers that have not yet registered.

Effectiveness

TIP's pandemic vaccine pre-registration process has fully achieved its goals. To date, over 1,000 facilities have completed pre-registration. Well over 2,500 new TWIS users have been added so far, dramatically increasing the registry's visibility. TIP has received few phone calls and questions about vaccine from the pre-registered providers. By not requiring VFC providers to register, TIP's small registry staff could focus on facilitating the registration of new providers. Tennessee is on track to fill all of its federally allocated shipping locations: from September 18 to 26, over 500 pre-registered facilities placed an initial H1N1 vaccine order.

Potential for replication

TIP was invited by CDC to present its pre-registration project on a national CDC pandemic vaccination planning conference call on July 16, 2009. A brief written description of the concept was distributed to all immunization programs and state health departments; the simplicity of the concept allows for adaptation to the specific needs of different states. TIP was contacted by several states to discuss how they could design such a system. Tennessee's project has become the model for similar pre-registration systems in other states.

For additional information, contact Helen Fox Fields at aiminfo@comcast.net.