



# Moving Forward

## **Program: Nevada**

**Activity:** Enrolling pharmacies in the VFC program

### Overview of activity

The Nevada Department of Health and Human Service Immunization Program enrolled pharmacies in the VFC program in response to a new state Medicaid requirement.

### Ages targeted

All adolescents

### Background/impetus for the activity

Effective April 17, 2012, the Nevada Medicaid and S-CHIP (called Nevada Check Up) programs began allowing reimbursement to pharmacies for administration of adult and childhood vaccines. Pharmacies were required to enroll in VFC to obtain vaccine product (at no cost to the administer), which was to be offered to Medicaid/Check Up enrollees age 18 and younger.

### Description of activity

In response to this policy, the Nevada State Immunization Program (NSIP) contacted several pharmacies about participating in VFC. Interest was limited, but included a local, independent pharmacy in southern, rural Nevada, and several stores from a national retail pharmacy company.

The pharmacy in southern, rural Nevada enrolled in VFC in part to address health care provider shortage issues in that area of the state and has been the main vaccine provider in that area. This provider successfully participated in VFC for about 5 years, but recently dropped out when its ownership changed.

NSIP worked with the national pharmacy company to select several stores in zip codes serving lower income individuals that also had buy-in among staff, most of which were in urban Clark County (Las Vegas). The stores operated as “specialty providers” under VFC, and the focus of their participation was to serve as an access point for adolescents. The stores stocked HPV, MenACWY, and Tdap vaccines, and influenza vaccine in season; a few stores also stocked varicella and MMR vaccines. Several issues arose during their VFC participation—including conflict/duplication between VFC and corporate requirements (eg, for temperature logs), turnover among retail pharmacists, and confusion regarding Medicaid billing and reimbursement (eg, FFS vs managed care policies). The NSIP determined the stores were not using their VFC vaccines because store staff said they were not receiving Medicaid reimbursement for adolescent vaccines. After participating for about 1.5 years, the pharmacy chain dropped out of VFC, and the NSIP redistributed its remaining doses of VFC vaccines to other VFC providers.

### Role of Immunization Program and other agencies/groups involved

NSIP worked closely with its immunization coalition (Immunize Nevada) to initiate and implement this activity.



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### Dissemination

NSIP communicated directly with pharmacy providers about the option of enrolling in the VFC program. NSIP was familiar with several pharmacy providers from H1N1 response activities. In addition, the Nevada Board of Pharmacy disseminated information to its members and facilitated teleconference Q&A calls between its members and NSIP.

### Intersection with other program activities

NSIP/Immunize Nevada produced an educational handout to give parents at back-to-school time that included information on where they could receive vaccines, including at pharmacies. Also, NSIP coordinates community-based vaccination clinics that bring together both a VFC vaccinator (for VFC eligible children) and pharmacies (for privately insured children and adults).

### Funding

NSIP's work on this activity was funded under its regular cooperative agreement with CDC.

### Staffing

The VFC Coordinator was the main NSIP staff person involved with this activity.

### Implementation status

The Medicaid policy remains unchanged. Pharmacies may participate in VFC, but no pharmacies are currently enrolled. Answers to Medicaid reimbursement issues are still unclear.

### Successes

- NSIP was able to enroll several pharmacies in the VFC program after the Medicaid requirement was implemented.
- Though not able to sustain a pharmacy presence for vaccinating Medicaid-enrolled adolescents, NSIP actively partners with pharmacies in a variety of other areas (eg, adult vaccination, community clinics), and pharmacies are involved in vaccinating adolescents not covered by VFC

### Challenges

- It has been difficult to communicate with Nevada Medicaid on vaccine reimbursement challenges, as these challenges are a lower priority for Medicaid than other issues.
- Also, Medicaid managed care vs fee-for-service reimbursement policies may have a differential impact on pharmacies depending on where they are located; most Medicaid managed care organizations (and large retail pharmacies) are concentrated in the urban areas of the state.

- Vaccines are not the primary focus of the pharmacy retail environment, and therefore the burden of meeting VFC provider requirements may seem out of scale with their day-to-day priorities. As younger pharmacists, who are more likely to have experienced vaccine training as part of their curriculum, enter the workforce, providing vaccines to publicly insured patients may become a higher priority.

#### Other lessons learned/Advice to other programs

- Before recruiting pharmacies to the VFC program, Immunization Programs should ensure that their Medicaid program's reimbursement and billing policies are clear, including whether both FFS- and managed care-enrolled Medicaid populations are covered. This may require working directly with Medicaid MCOs to understand their policies.
- Enrolling pharmacies in VFC may work best in health care provider shortage areas, where taking adolescents out of a medical home is less of a concern and pharmacies may be more accustomed to taking on a bigger health care load (eg, chronic disease management and counseling).

#### Relevant resources

- Announcement of Medicaid and Nevada Check Up reimbursement for pharmacist-administered vaccines (May 2, 2012): [https://www.medicaid.nv.gov/Downloads/provider/NVRx\\_Admin\\_IJz\\_20120502.pdf](https://www.medicaid.nv.gov/Downloads/provider/NVRx_Admin_IJz_20120502.pdf)  
Back-to-school reference sheets regarding where to go for vaccines: "Don't Wait... Vaccinate." (in English and Spanish), and "Is Your Child Up to Date with Shots" flowchart: [https://www.immunizationmanagers.org/resource/collection/143EE749-3478-4063-81EB-2E9A35CA57E3/NV\\_Dont\\_Wait\\_ENG\\_SPAN.pdf](https://www.immunizationmanagers.org/resource/collection/143EE749-3478-4063-81EB-2E9A35CA57E3/NV_Dont_Wait_ENG_SPAN.pdf)

#### For more information

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