

Immunization Program Leaders Call for Federal Investment in COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Preparation

Leaders advise that investment in three key areas will prepare the nation for successful COVID-19 vaccine distribution.

WASHINGTON, D.C., Apr. 9, 2020—The Association of Immunization Managers (AIM)—which represents the leaders of the [64 federally-funded state, territorial, and local public health immunization programs](#)—is urging Congress to invest in three key areas to strengthen the nation’s immunization infrastructure to prepare for mass vaccination against COVID-19.

AIM calls for Congress to invest in 1) immunization information systems, 2) staffing, and 3) outreach and communication.

Public health immunization programs—working in partnership with private physicians, pharmacists, local health departments, and other providers—successfully vaccinated 81 million Americans against H1N1 in response to the 2009 influenza pandemic. This same public-private partnership annually ensures millions of vaccinations at no cost for qualifying children through the [Vaccines for Children \(VFC\) program](#), which is administered by state public health agencies.

“We’re experienced and we’re skilled,” says Michele Roberts, who leads Washington state’s immunization program and chairs AIM’s executive committee. “Immunization program staff are working very hard to prepare for a large-scale vaccination, but we need additional resources.”

Investment is needed in these three areas:

Immunization Information Systems (IIS). IIS are confidential, HIPAA-compliant, and secure population-based computerized databases that record vaccine doses administered by participating providers. State public health agencies use IIS to enroll providers, process vaccine orders, and produce coverage reports.

“Every state’s IIS should be able to capture each administered dose of COVID-19 vaccine and report uptake by geographic area and target population, such as first responders or healthcare workers,” says AIM’s Executive Director Claire Hannan. “Additionally, consumers will need access to their IIS records to demonstrate COVID-19 immunity to prospective employers and others.”

Staffing. Approximately 40,000 providers are enrolled in the VFC program. “Adding providers who serve adults into IIS is likely to triple that number,” says Hannan. “Newly enrolled providers will need training on how to order, store, and administer vaccine, as well as record doses administered.” Additional staff will be needed to plan and implement mass vaccination clinics.

Outreach and communication will be critical throughout the planning and execution phases of COVID-19 vaccination. Demand for vaccine will be high and consumers will need to know where and

when to get vaccinated. Additional communication will be needed to remind all Americans of the importance of routine preventive healthcare and vaccination during a pandemic.

“Once a COVID-19 vaccine is available, it will be all hands on deck,” says Roberts, whose immunization program in Washington state hired four full-time employees during the H1N1 pandemic. “We save lives with vaccine every day, but this is an unprecedented opportunity to protect American lives. With immediate investment and focused preparation, we hope to protect all Americans from COVID-19.”

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The Association of Immunization Managers (AIM) is a nonprofit membership association which supports the nation’s 64 federally-funded state, territorial, and local public health immunization programs. AIM works to enable immunization managers to work together to effectively prevent and control vaccine-preventable diseases and improve immunization coverage in the United States and its territories.

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