

2025 AIM Leadership in Action Conference

Closing Plenary

Karen Ernst
Program Director
Voices for Vaccines

December 11, 2025





Here's the Good News!

This hasn't been an easy year



Self-care is important

Actual photo of me
doing self-care in 2025



But there's good news

1. Scientific advances
2. Program initiatives
3. Cool people
4. National landscape



Know who the bad guys are





Good News About Science

Vaccine science keeps marching along



Science hasn't changed



What we know to be true is still true:

- Vaccines do not cause autism
- In the first year of COVID vaccination, 19.8 million deaths were averted worldwide
- In my lifetime, vaccines have saved 154 million lives
 - 95 million of those through measles vaccination alone
- Vaccines account for a 40% decline in infant mortality worldwide



Science is still advancing



What's new in vaccine science?

1. Group B Strep Vaccines
2. Flu Vaccines
3. Vaccines can do THAT, too?

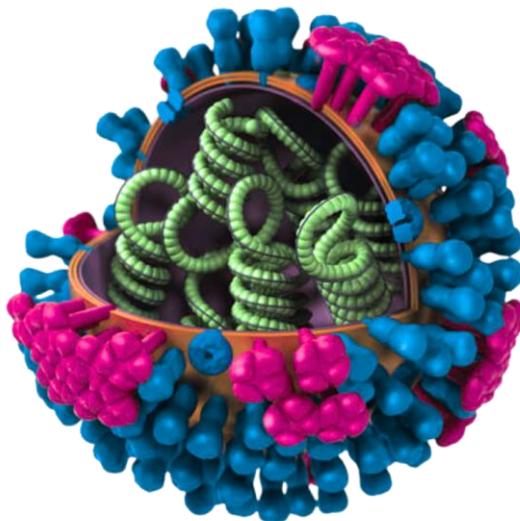


Group B Strep vaccines

- A new vaccine to protect newborns from group B strep (GBS) is being tested in early-stage trials
- Designed to be given during pregnancy as a single dose.
- If successful, it could prevent dangerous early-onset GBS infections in babies around the world
- GBS infections can lead to sepsis, pneumonia, or even death.



Building better flu vaccines



A large study tested a new mRNA flu vaccine

- It prevented 29% more flu cases than the egg-based flu shot
- Overall effectiveness was 60–67%, compared with 44–54% for the egg-based vaccine.
- We could have better flu vaccines in the future both for seasonal flu and for future pandemics



Vaccines help cancer patients

Good news for cancer patients who get a COVID mRNA vaccine before starting immunotherapy:

- Patients had better overall survival and stronger responses to tumors than those who were not vaccinated beforehand
- The vaccine may help “prime” the immune system to fight cancer more effectively
- Supports strong vaccine recommendations for cancer patients





Programs succeed

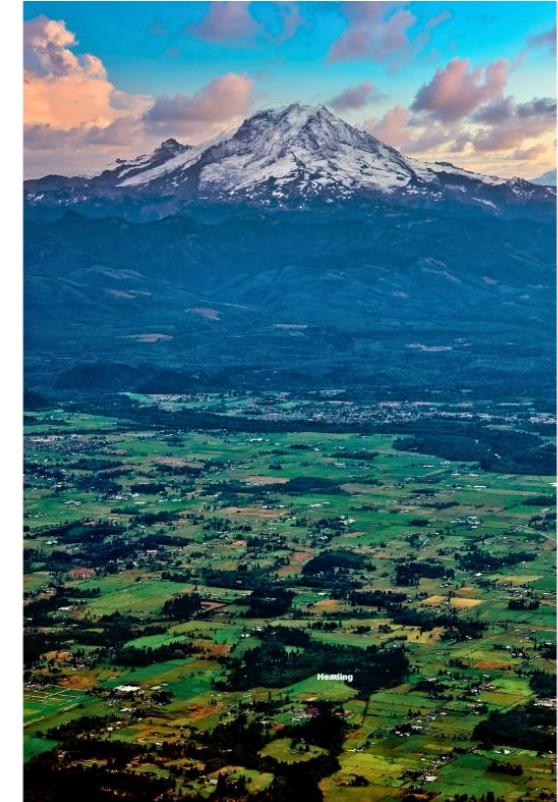
Organizations and health departments are making a difference



Washington is fighting HPV earlier

Project involved the state health department, the state pediatricians' group, and nine clinics.

- Focused on getting kids vaccinated for HPV starting at age 9
- HPV vaccination at age 9 rose from 4% to 14%, with some clinics improving by up to 18 percentage points
- Provider confidence in recommending the vaccine increased from 74% to 94%, making future cancer prevention even more likely



Wisconsin counties and equity



Dane County: Vaccinations and education offered at the Back-to-School Haircutz community event

Milwaukee County: Children's Health & Wellness Fair included vaccination checks and referrals

Calumet, Outagamie & Winnebago Counties: Health info events and back-to-school gatherings embedded routine vaccine education.



Monroe County: Resource fairs used to promote adolescent vaccines in rural communities.



Maine is pulling it together

- A new statewide tech upgrade is helping schools find missing vaccine records more easily and improve compliance
- 50,000 records have been transferred into the system
- Schools reached 79% compliance, meaning far fewer missing or incomplete records.



Mass vaccination in Massachusetts

Massachusetts identified schools with low vaccination rates and worked with districts and local health boards to offer school-based vaccine clinics

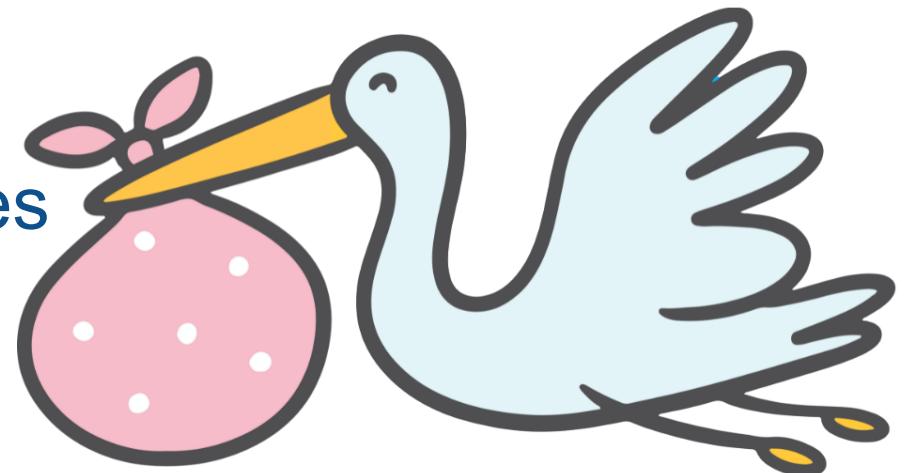
- Required checking students' vaccine needs to handling consent forms and privacy rules.
- Team refine a checklist that made later clinics smoother and more efficient
- The state is now creating a Best Practices guide to easily replicate the model



New initiatives this year:

Groups have come together to work on immunization:

- Vaccine Integrity Project through CIDRAP
- Grandparents for Vaccines
- Sabin's Boost Community
- Voices for Vaccines' upgraded initiatives
 - Vaccine Action Alliance
 - Vax Advocate program





Good people

work in immunization



Sheyanga Beecher, MSN, MPH, CNP



Medical Director, Hennepin Healthcare Mobile Health Program (Minnesota)

- Built one of the nation's strongest mobile pediatric immunization programs
- Administered 12,000+ vaccines, including COVID, flu, HPV, and routine childhood shots
- Served predominantly BIPOC and immigrant families
- Integrated checkups, vision screening, and immunizations into a one-stop mobile model



Kateri Chino, MSW

Expanded vaccine access for Indigenous communities through:

- Mobile clinics, trusted-messenger partnerships, and culturally grounded outreach across multiple Tribal nations in New Mexico
- Culturally tailored immunization education
- Stronger Tribal public-health infrastructure
- New Mexico's first Tribal Vaccine Equity Conference

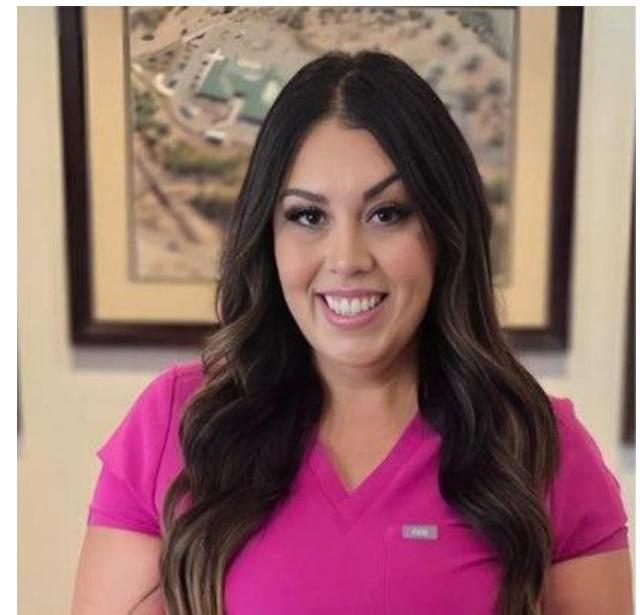


Adelina Lopez, LPN



Immunization Coordinator, United Community Health Center (Arizona)

- Coordinated vaccination services across 11 clinics serving rural and border communities.
- Launched creative, culturally inclusive campaigns like Fluchella boosting turnout.
- Implemented AccuVax to reduce errors and strengthen cold-chain compliance across all sites.





Public Sentiment

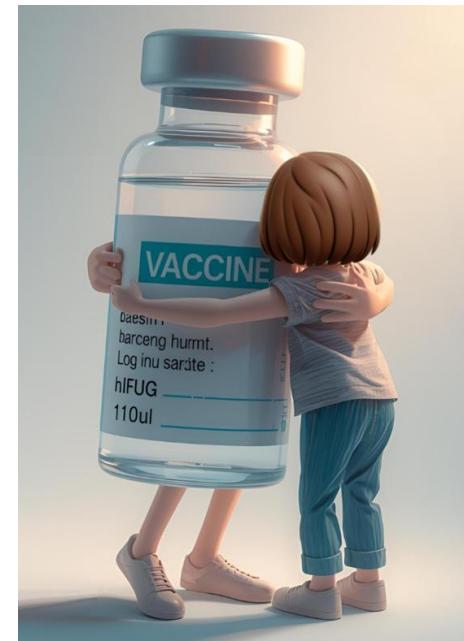
is still on our side



The majority trust vaccines

The majority of Americans believe that childhood vaccines are safe, effective, and well-tested across:

- All age groups
- All educational backgrounds
- All political leanings
- All racial groups



Older, educated Americans



■ Extremely/Very ■ Somewhat ■ Not too/Not at all

Childhood vaccines are highly effective at preventing serious illness

U.S. adults 63 21 11

Childhood vaccines have been tested enough for safety

53 22 19

The children's vaccine schedule is safe

51 23 19

Ages 18-29 60 20 12

50 23 19

49 23 18

30-49 59 24 12

48 25 21

46 25 20

50-64 64 22 11

55 21 20

52 22 21

65+ 72 17 8

63 19 13

59 19 16

White 66 20 10

55 21 20

52 21 20

Black 54 25 13

50 26 15

46 28 16

Hispanic 58 24 11

49 26 17

49 25 16

Asian* 70 18 9

62 23 11

61 23 10

Postgrad 77 14 7

69 17 12

67 18 13

College grad 71 19 8

61 21 16

57 20 19

Some college 64 22 10

52 23 20

48 24 21

HS or less 54 24 14

44 25 21

44 26 19

* Estimates for Asian adults are representative of English speakers only.

Note: Respondents who said "Not sure" or did not give an answer are not shown. White, Black and Asian adults include those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic. Hispanic adults are of any race.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Oct. 20-26, 2025.

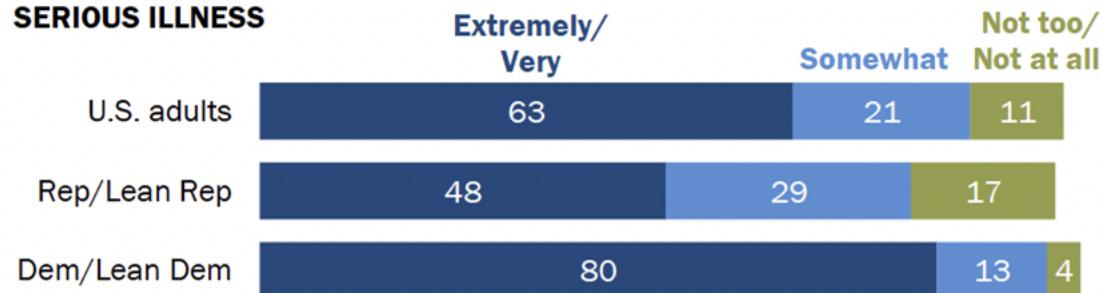
"How Do Americans View Childhood Vaccines, Vaccine Research and Policy?"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

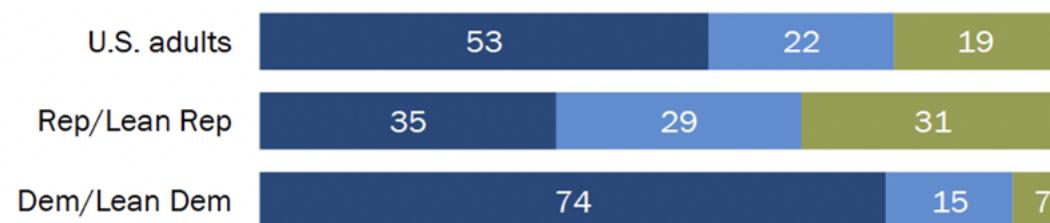


Political leanings

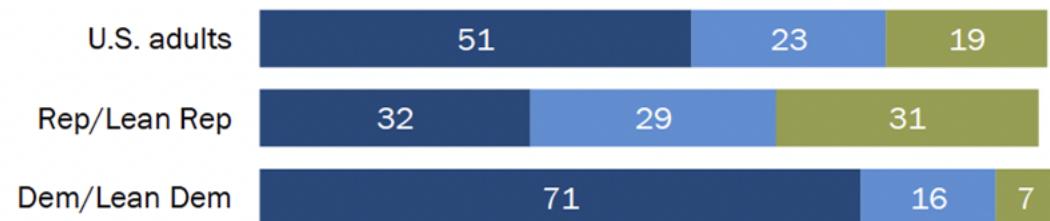
CHILDHOOD VACCINES ARE HIGHLY EFFECTIVE AT PREVENTING SERIOUS ILLNESS



CHILDHOOD VACCINES HAVE BEEN TESTED ENOUGH FOR SAFETY



THE CHILDREN'S VACCINE SCHEDULE IS SAFE



Note: Respondents who said "Not sure" or did not give an answer are not shown.

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"How Do Americans View Childhood Vaccines, Vaccine Research and Policy?"

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Back to basics

Remember your WHY



Here's my WHY



And today



One vaccination at a time



Hundreds of stories



Price's Advice to Other Kids About COVID-19 Vaccines

October 26, 2021

I really want to talk to other kids about how we can make this go away, and that is for everyone to get our COVID-19 vaccines.



Why My Daughters Got the HPV Vaccine

March 2, 2023

After what it put our family through, I had to make sure my daughters were protected.



Every vaccination is a win



Joseph S. Thomas, MD

To protect myself and my loved ones, because vaccines are a group effort.



Rossana M Rosa

I immunize and promote immunizations so people won't end up in the hospital!



Alex McDonald

To protect myself, to protect my family and keep my community healthy.



Jason Parker

So I'm in my best health when others are in need of me.



Questions?



Email: kernst@voicesforvaccines.org

Website: VoicesForVaccines.org

Newsletter: VoicesForVaccines.org/Resources/just-the-facts-newsletter/

