

VFC - Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Vaccines for Children (VFC) program?

Introduced in 1994 by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), New Jersey VFC is a federally funded, state operated vaccine supply program that provides pediatric vaccines at no cost to doctors who serve children who might not otherwise be vaccinated because of inability to pay. Physicians may charge office visit and administration fees based on a government fee schedule. There are over 1,200 medical offices enrolled in the New Jersey VFC program and the most are private providers.

What are the VFC provider eligibility requirements?

A medical professional authorized to prescribe vaccines under NJ state law can become a VFC provider. Medicaid and NJ FamilyCare A providers need to enroll in the VFC program to receive free vaccine. Medicaid will not reimburse the cost of children's vaccines recommended by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) to participating providers.

What are the benefits of joining the VFC program?

- Reduces providers' out-of-pocket costs – providers don't have to buy vaccines with their own money
- Allows providers to charge an administrative fee to offset their costs of doing business
- Keeps patients in their medical home for comprehensive health care
- Supplies providers with ACIP recommended vaccines
- Helps providers avoid missed opportunities for immunizations

What are the VFC patient eligibility requirements?

The VFC program was created to meet the vaccination needs of children from birth through 18 years of age. Patients eligible to receive VFC vaccines are children who:

- are enrolled in Medicaid or Medicaid Managed Care (NJ FamilyCare Plan A)
- are American Indian or Alaskan Native
- do not have any health insurance
- are underinsured:
 - insurance does not cover vaccines
 - insurance covers selected vaccines- eligible for non-covered vaccines only
 - insurance pays a limited amount for vaccines

Underinsured children are eligible to receive VFC vaccines only through a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC). Direct these patients to a local FQHC that participates in VFC: <http://www.njpca.org/FQHC/directory.aspx>

How do I order vaccine for children who have New Jersey FamilyCare insurance plans B, C, & D?

NEW 4/4/14

The CDC has clarified that children enrolled in the Separate Children's Health Insurance Program (S-CHIP), also known as New Jersey FamilyCare, Plans B, C & D, are considered insured and are ineligible to participate in the VFC program. Due to changes implemented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in the NJ VFC program on October 1, 2013, it has become necessary for providers vaccinating members enrolled in FamilyCare Plans B, C and D to supply vaccines from their commercial supply. DMAHS will direct NJ FamilyCare managed care plans to pay both provider administration and vaccine supply claims, effective July 1, 2014.

What are the VFC Program Requirements?

Do:

- Screen the parent/guardian of the child to determine VFC eligibility at each vaccination visit and document the outcome.
- Enter vaccinations into New Jersey's Immunization Information System within 30 days of administration.
- Comply with the recommended immunization schedule as established by the ACIP and NJ state immunization laws.
- Provide vaccine information materials (VIS's) during each vaccination and maintain records in accordance with the National Vaccine Injury Compensation Act.
- Comply with VFC ordering accountability and quality assurance requirements.
- Re-enroll on a yearly

basis. **Do Not:**

- Do not charge for VFC-supplied vaccines.
- Do not impose a fee for vaccine administration that is higher than the fee cap established by the Center for Medicaid and Medicare, which as of 1/1/13 is \$24.23 per vaccination (not per antigen, as in combination vaccines).
- Do not deny vaccination if the administration fee cannot be paid.

Can I obtain vaccine for adult patients?

Not for Profits, Health Departments and Federally Qualified Health Care Centers (FQHCs) should contact the NJ VFC program to inquire about the availability of vaccines for adult uninsured/underinsured patients. Adults who are eligible to receive vaccine from this program must have no insurance coverage for the vaccine they need. If the adult has a high co-pay or an unmet deductible, they are considered insured and are ineligible to receive vaccine from this program.

For profit physicians' offices are ineligible to receive vaccine for adult patients and are not to use VFC vaccine for adults. Physicians should bill Medicaid and Medicare for vaccine given to adults who have these insurances. If an adult patient requires vaccine not covered by Medicaid or Medicare; the patient has no health insurance or their insurance does not pay for the vaccine they need, they should be referred to a FQHC or health department for vaccination.

Are there vaccine storage & handling requirements?

Yes, program participation requires that 2 office staff be designated as vaccine managers who will be responsible for the handling and storage of vaccine received from the VFC program. These vaccine managers will educate other office staff in proper vaccine storage and handling procedures.

Offices which participate in the VFC program must develop a written, routine vaccine storage and handling plan and a plan for how vaccines would be relocated in the event of an emergency. The routine vaccine storage plan should detail how vaccines will be ordered, how deliveries will be accepted and stored, how temperatures are taken, inventory is managed and check expiration dates weekly, as well as removal and return of expired vaccine. The relocation plan would be used in the event of power failures, refrigerator malfunctions and natural disasters. The relocation plan should be enacted when there is a known threat to the vaccine inventory. For example, news of an impending storm likely to cause power outages or flooding is a reason to enact the emergency relocation plan. It is crucial that a well thought out plan be developed in advance of an emergency and that it be enacted *before* the arrival of the anticipated emergency. The VFC program does have a template available upon request to assist providers in developing a comprehensive vaccine storage and handling plan.

What type of refrigerator is recommended for vaccine storage?

It is recommended that VFC vaccine be stored in temperature-monitored, alarm-equipped, stand-alone refrigerators and freezers (per CDC recommendations). Combination refrigerator/freezer units sold for home use are currently acceptable for vaccine storage. When a combination refrigerator/freezer is used, it must have a separate thermostat control for the refrigerator and one the freezer. Use of dorm-style or bar-style refrigerator/freezers for vaccine storage, even temporary storage,

is not permitted. The refrigerator should be big enough to store the year's largest inventory.

Are there rules as to how vaccine is stored in the refrigerator?

Yes, the refrigerator and freezer may store vaccine and medicine only. Food and specimens are not to be stored with vaccine. VFC vaccine is to be kept separated from privately purchased vaccine. This is done by placing VFC and private vaccine on separate, labeled shelves, or placing vaccine in open, well-ventilated, labeled containers. If there is a vent from the freezer for cold air to enter the refrigerator at the top shelf, vaccine should not be stored here. Remove or place water bottles in the lunch meat and fruit and vegetable drawers in the refrigerator to keep from storing vaccine in these closed spaces. Place vaccine in the middle of the refrigerator, away from the front, side and rear walls. Arrange vaccine boxes so air can freely circulate around them. Vaccine is not to be stored on the refrigerator or freezer door. The door of the refrigerator should contain plastic bottles filled with water to stabilize the temperature. Likewise, the freezer should contain multiple packets of 'blue ice' to stabilize the temperature. The blue ice can also be used to transfer vaccines when enacting the emergency relocation plan. Vaccine should be kept in its' container/box until used. Vials and syringes should not be removed from the carton or refrigerator until the vaccination is prepared to be given.

Which temperatures and thermometer are recommended for vaccine storage?

Refrigerator temperatures should be maintained between 35° and 46°F (2° and 8°C); averaging 40°F. Freezer temperatures should be maintained at +5°F (-15°C) to no colder than -58°F (-50°C). Excessive heat or cold can damage vaccines, resulting in reduced potency. While exposure to both warm and cold temperatures can affect the potency of vaccines, a single exposure to freezing temperatures will destroy some refrigerated vaccines. This is why it is important to monitor vaccine temperatures and to take immediate corrective action when temperatures are outside the recommended range.

Use a National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) certified, calibrated thermometer in both the refrigerator and freezer and check temperatures twice a day at the open and close of business. Record temperatures in a log until they are entered into the online temperature log in IMODS or NJIIS. Use a biosafe glycol-encased thermometer probe or a similar temperature buffered probe. Place the thermometer probe in the center of the refrigerator away from the walls.

Email a copy of a current NIST thermometer certification with the VFC application forms. NIST certified thermometers require recertification, usually every 1-2 years. Plan to obtain recertification (typically there is a fee) prior to the expiration date, or purchase a new NIST certified calibrated thermometer.

What should be done if the refrigerator temperature goes out of range?

Get the vaccines back into the recommended temperature immediately. Put them in a working refrigerator or freezer at the correct temperature. Enact the vaccine retrieval plan if needed, to move them to a working refrigerator. Do not use the vaccines and label them as such. Do not throw the vaccines away or keep them out of the refrigerator. Write down the out of range temperature and the length of time the temperature was out of range. Call the vaccine manufacturers to ask if the vaccines are useable. Request faxed documentation of contact from the manufacturers and their recommendations. Call the VFC program to report that a temperature problem has occurred. Fax a letter of explanation of the incident, a corrective action plan to avoid a similar incident, along with the manufacturer's recommendations to the VFC program.

How are vaccines ordered from VFC?

The two vaccine managers at your office will take a class to learn to use the Inventory Management Order and Distribution System (IMODS). Vaccine orders are entered online in IMODS; transmitted to the CDC in Atlanta for review, then sent to McKesson Specialty in Memphis to be filled. The order is shipped overnight in temperature controlled containers for next day delivery by FedEx. Vaccines are usually received in 3-7 business days. The amount of vaccine ordered should be enough to last in between the months in which you order and an additional 2 weeks of 'safety stock' should be kept on hand.

Are we responsible for vaccine received from the VFC Program?

Yes, the Provider Enrollment form signed by the lead physician states that the practice will account for vaccine usage and will operate in a manner which avoids fraud and abuse. The lead physician should read the Provider Enrollment form carefully prior to signing this agreement.

Fraud: an intentional deception or misrepresentation made by a person with the knowledge that the deception could result in some unauthorized benefit to himself or some other person. It includes any act that constitutes fraud under applicable federal or state law.

Abuse: provider practices that are inconsistent with sound fiscal, business, or medical practices and result in an unnecessary cost to the Medicaid program, (and/or including actions that result in an unnecessary cost to the immunization program, a health insurance company, or a patient); or in reimbursement for services that are not medically necessary or that fail to meet professionally recognized standards for health care. Abuse also includes recipient practices that result in unnecessary cost to the Medicaid program.

Some examples of potential fraud and abuse include:

- Giving VFC vaccine to non-VFC-eligible children.
- Billing a patient or third party for VFC-funded vaccine.
- Failing to fully account for VFC vaccine.
- Waste of VFC vaccine.
- Failing to properly store or handle VFC vaccine.
- Failing to screen for and document eligibility status at every immunization visit.

Providers enrolled in the VFC program must enter all vaccinations into the New Jersey Immunization Information System (NJIS) and use the Inventory Management and Order Distribution System (IMODS) to record temperature logs and order vaccine. Entering vaccinations into NJIS is a way to confirm that VFC vaccine was given to VFC-eligible children and adults (not for profits, health departments & FQHC's only) who are eligible to receive vaccine from the VFC program.

**The lead physician is responsible to replace, dose for dose,
VFC vaccine lost due to mismanagement**

All unused vaccine must be returned to McKesson so the Federal Excise Tax can be credited back to the program. If VFC vaccine expires or is wasted, complete the Waste Return Label request in IMODS.

I want to order more vaccine, what can I do?

- High inventory will cause an order to be reduced or cancelled due to a lack of accountability for vaccines previously received.
- Check inventory routinely to insure that data entered by hand or sent from an EMR have reduced vaccine inventory.
- If inventory does not deduct when an EMR sends vaccination data to NJIS, contact your EMR vendor for assistance.
- Enter vaccinations into NJIS by hand selecting lot numbers or use an electronic medical record (EMR) which is interfaced with NJIS to reduce inventory.
- If inventory does not deduct after vaccinations are entered by hand for VFC-eligible children, consider taking a refresher class in the use of NJIS or contact the NJIS Trainer for your county.

I have expired VFC vaccine, how do I request a shipping label to return them?

- Login to either NJIS or IMODS
- Click on "Waste Return Label"
- Read the instructions at the top of the page

- Click on the red button "IMM-39 Form"
- Fill out the required fields (NDC Number, Lot Number, Expiration Date, Viable Vaccine, Code, Number of Doses)
- Put in a comment of why the vaccines are being returned
- Click send

NDC numbers can found in your online inventory or from CDC's price list. NDC numbers should be in this format XXXXX-XXXX-XX.

My office is on vaccine hold, how can I order more vaccine?

Review the reason the office was placed on vaccine hold and complete recommendations such as:

- Developing a vaccine management plan
- Obtaining a larger refrigerator to accommodate vaccine
- Completing the vaccine restitution plan
- Submitting re-enrollment in a timely manner
- Completing IMODS or NJIIS training
- Obtaining an NIST certified calibrated thermometer

How do I become a VFC provider?

1. Go to: www.njiis.nj.gov
2. Click on the VFC -Vaccines for Children tab on the left-hand side of the page
3. Scroll to the bottom of the page and complete the following forms for VFC enrollment:
 - Provider Enrollment (Imm-25)
 - Provider Profile: Pediatrics (Imm-26) or the Provider Profile: Adults (IMM-18)
 - Licensed Medical Providers List (Imm-26A)
4. Send forms electronically to: VFC@doh.state.nj.us

What happens after I apply to enroll in the VFC program?

Your application will be processed and you will receive a reply by fax and email. Follow the directions contained in the letter to prepare for a site visit. A site visit will be conducted prior to the first vaccine order. Arrange for 2 vaccine managers to obtain training in the use of IMODS and NJIIS. Register for NJIIS and IMODS training by going to: www.njiis.nj.gov and click on NJIIS Training Opportunities on the left side of the page. Please note: all trainings must be completed prior to the program assigning staff to a site visit.

How often does re-enrollment occur?

Re-enrollment in the VFC program occurs every year. Check your email and the VFC Bulletin Board routinely for the date of re-enrollment. Vaccine orders cannot be filled when your site's re-enrollment date has expired.

Are current Medicaid and NJ FamilyCare A Fee for Service (FFS) providers required to enroll in the VFC program?

On April 1, 1999, the New Jersey Medicaid Program terminated fee for service coverage and reimbursement for vaccines available from the Vaccines for Children Program for children under 19 years of age.

Will private physicians be required to enroll in Medicaid in order to participate in the VFC program?

No, however, administration fees or office visit fees under fee-for-service Medicaid will not be paid by the Medicaid program unless the physician is a Medicaid provider and the child is enrolled in Medicaid.

Once enrolled in the VFC program, must I see children because they are eligible for VFC?

No, a physician is not required to accept an uninsured child into his/her practice merely because the child is eligible for immunization through the VFC program. If the office has met its own limit of children enrolled in Medicaid or FamilyCare A insurance plans, they are not required to accept additional children.

Can I be reimbursed for privately purchased vaccine used for VFC-eligible children?

No, once VFC vaccine is received, you may vaccinate VFC-eligible children. Your office must meet all requirements to participate in the VFC program and have received a successful site visit prior to ordering VFC vaccine. Once VFC vaccine is received, it is not to be transferred to private stock to replace vaccine used for VFC-eligible children.

Must I enroll in the VFC program again if I have multiple office locations?

Yes, each office location must enroll in the VFC program in order to use VFC vaccine. Vaccine is not to be transported from an enrolled VFC office to one which is not enrolled in the program.

How Can I Contact the VFC Program?

Contact the New Jersey Department of Health, Vaccines for Children Program by clicking on “contact us” at <https://njiis.nj.gov/njiis/html/vfc.html> or call (609) 826-4862 during business hours.

Additional information from the CDC VFC website is available at:
www.cdc.gov/vaccines/programs/vfc.

Check your email and the VFC Bulletin Board (in NJIIS and IMODS) routinely for current program information.