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Bulletin No. 28 October 19, 2011

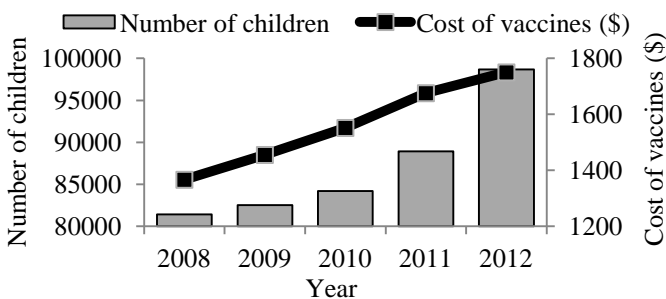
Further Cuts in State-Provided Vaccines for VFC-Ineligible Children in 2012

Background

In Alaska, state-supplied childhood vaccines are funded almost entirely through two federal funding sources. The primary source is the *Vaccines for Children (VFC) Program*, which pays for all Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP)-recommended vaccines for children who are Medicaid eligible, American Indian/Alaska Native, and uninsured. Underinsured children (i.e., children with private health insurance that covers no or only selected vaccines, or caps vaccine coverage at a certain amount) are also eligible to receive VFC vaccine, but only if they are seen at a specified Rural Health Clinic (RHC) or at a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC). FQHCs are health centers designated by the federal Health Resources and Services Administration to provide health care to medically underserved populations.

The second funding source is *Section 317 of the U.S. Public Health Service Act (317)*, which provides limited vaccine funding for VFC-ineligible persons (i.e., adults, fully insured children, and underinsured children who are not seen at a FQHC or a RHC). The number of VFC-ineligible children in Alaska is increasing steadily, as is the cost to fully vaccinate a child through age 18 years (Figure).^{1,2} Of the estimated 98,689 Alaska children who will be VFC-ineligible in 2012, 46,884 (48%) will be underinsured.¹

Figure. Number of VFC-Ineligible Children and Estimated Cost of Recommended Vaccines for One Child from Birth through Age 18 Years — Alaska, 2008–2012



On October 6, 2010, the Section of Epidemiology (SOE) published a *Bulletin* describing a \$1.2 million annual decrease in Alaska's 317 federal funding for 3 years starting in 2011 (from \$4.3 million in 2010 to \$700,000 in 2013).³ The rationale for the cuts was that Alaska had been "significantly overfunded" relative to other state immunization programs for many years and, due to budgetary constraints, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) was no longer able to support Alaska's universal immunization program.³

In order to absorb this enormous reduction in 317 funding, the Alaska Immunization Program has implemented mitigation measures over the past 2 years, including the following:

- Discontinuation of 317-funded adult vaccines;³
- Discontinuation of 317-funded meningococcal (MCV4) and human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine for VFC-ineligible children;³
- Requiring dose-level accountability for state-supplied vaccine;⁴ and
- Educating providers on ways to reduce vaccine wastage.⁵

Alaska's 317-funded Vaccines in 2012

Alaska's 317 budget for 2012 is \$1.9 million. To meet this budget, the Immunization Program must further reduce the number of 317-funded vaccines available for Alaska's VFC-ineligible children. Factors involved in deciding which vaccines to cut in 2012 included public health impact, vaccine costs, and school/childcare compliance requirements.

In addition to HPV and MCV4, the following three vaccines will no longer be supplied by the state for VFC-ineligible children: as of January 2012, *pneumococcal conjugate (PCV 13)* and *rotavirus*; as of July 2012, *influenza* (Table).

Table. State-Supplied Vaccines that will be Available to VFC-Ineligible Children in Alaska in 2012

ACIP Recommended Childhood Vaccines	Estimated Cost of Vaccines for VFC-Ineligible Children in 2012	State-Supplied Vaccines Available in 2012 to VFC-Ineligible Children
DTaP	\$234,038	Available
Hepatitis A	\$177,755	Available
Hepatitis B	\$106,463	Available
Hib	\$137,498	Available
HPV	\$350,307	Not available (as of 1/09)
Influenza	\$371,881	Not available (as of 7/12)
MCV4	\$256,695	Not available (as of 1/09)
MMR	\$143,497	Available
PCV 13	\$1,655,175	Not available (as of 1/12)
Polio	\$152,783	Available
Rotavirus	\$530,870	Not available (as of 1/12)
Td/Tdap	\$132,449	Available
Varicella	\$779,434	Available
Total Cost	\$5,028,845	\$1,863,917 (for available vaccines)

Some Good News

In the near future, public health centers statewide will be able to provide VFC-funded vaccines to underinsured children.

Here's how: FQHCs are allowed to vaccinate underinsured children using VFC vaccine. Additionally, FQHCs are allowed to delegate their authority to (i.e., deputize) public health VFC providers (e.g., public health centers and local health departments) to vaccinate underinsured children on their behalf. On September 23, 2011, the Anchorage Neighborhood Health Center (an FQHC) signed a memorandum of agreement with SOE that authorizes the Alaska Immunization Program to administer delegation of authority to SOA public health centers statewide to vaccinate underinsured children using VFC vaccine. PHCs will implement this authority as soon as possible.

Recommendations

1. Health care providers *must screen all children for VFC-eligibility at each visit* prior to administering state-supplied vaccine;⁶ VFC-ineligible children may only receive select state-supplied vaccines (Table).
2. Underinsured children may be referred to an FQHC, RHC, or public health center where they are eligible to receive all ACIP-recommended vaccines for free under the VFC Program.
3. Manufacturer contact information for vaccine ordering is posted on the SOE website to assist providers in purchasing vaccines for VFC-ineligible children.⁷

References

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2. CDC's Vaccine Price List. Updated September 29, 2011. Available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/programs/vfc/cdc-vac-price-list.htm>
3. Section of Epidemiology *Bulletin*. "Only Pediatric/Adolescent Vaccines to be Supplied by State Beginning in 2011." No. 31, October 6, 2010. Available at: http://www.epi.alaska.gov/bulletins/docs/b2010_31.pdf
4. CDC's VFC Operations Guide, Module 8. January 2011. Available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/programs/vfc/downloads/vfc-op-guide/12-module-8.pdf>
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