​





**Strategies for Imp​roving Influenza Vaccination Rates**

**during the 2019 – 2020 Flu Season**

​Implement one or more of the evidence-based strategies below to increase influenza immunization coverage rates in your practice. Louisiana currently has the highest influenza rates in the nation with influenza activity continuing to increase in recent weeks. School-aged children have been most impacted with numerous school outbreaks being reported.

Providers should encourage all patients six months of age and older who have not yet received an influenza vaccination this season to be vaccinated against influenza. Flu vaccination has many benefits. Flu vaccination can:

* Reduce the risk of flu illness and serious flu outcomes like hospitalization, ICU admission or even death.
* Prevent millions of illnesses, tens of thousands of hospitalizations and thousands of deaths every year (nationally).
* Make illness less severe if children do get sick.

As you know, in recent years, Louisiana has ranked among the lowest in the nation for statewide flu vaccination coverage. Let’s all work to reverse this trend and get our children and teens vaccinated this flu season.

**Patient Reminder-Recall**

Immunization reminder-recall systems are cost-effective methods to identify and notify families whose children are due soon for immunizations (reminder) or are already behind (recall). Reminder and recall systems are powerful ways to ensure optimal vaccination rates. Staff members first pull a list containing names and contact information of patients who are due or overdue for immunizations and then contact those patients to schedule a time to receive immunizations. The Louisiana Immunization Network (LINKS) and many electronic health record systems (EHRs) can generate such reports easily if immunization records and family contact information is updated at every visit. Building these practices into patient flow is key.

Methods to remind or recall patients include:

* **Phone calls by office staff**

Calls placed by office staff tend to be more effective than auto-dialer calls, but often cost more.

* **Auto-dialers**

Auto-dialers automatically dial phone numbers and either play a recorded message or connect the call to a live person. Such systems also can be used for appointment reminders.

* **Mail reminder cards or letters**

Your IIS or EHR may print these for you.

* **Text messages**

Families opt-in for text messages so your office can text reminders to both parents and adolescents. While parents/guardians need to consent for the vaccine, it is useful to include adolescents in the discussion of their own care.

* **Patient Portals**

Many EHR systems come with a patient portal option. Practices can use this feature to send emails to patients or parents prompting them to check their patient portal, which will remind them of vaccinations that are due.

For more information, visit:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [www.cdc.gov/vaccines/recs/reminder-sys.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/recs/reminder-sys.htm) or the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) <https://www.aap.org/en-us/Documents/immunization_reminderrecall.pdf>

The following is a list of some auto-dialer vendors. Please note that we cannot endorse or recommend specific products or brands. This is only meant to aid you in your selection.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Auto-dialer**  | **Website**  |
| Call-em-all  | <https://www.call-em-all.com/>  |
| Call Fire  | <http://www.callfire.com>  |
| Televox/West  | <http://www.televox.com/appointment-reminders/>  |
| Voicent  | <http://www.voicent.com/autodialers.php>  |

**Hold Vaccine Clinics at Hours that are Convenient for Families**

Holding vaccination clinics with special hours (evenings, Saturdays or Sundays) at your practice allows for adolescents and their parents with busy schedules to access vaccination services. Offering special hours works especially well for administration on influenza vaccinations.

**Provide a Strong Recommendation**

Studies have shown that parents trust their pediatrician’s guidance and it is important to give a strong recommendation for vaccination. Studies show parents believe vaccines are important for child health and rate the importance of disease prevention higher than concerns about the number of injections involved. Be sure to give a strong recommendation for all vaccines on the current schedule and not merely mention that they are available. Studies show a ‘presumptive’ or ‘announcement’ rather than ‘participatory’ approach is associated with significantly fewer vaccine refusals.

**Provider Prompts**

Provider prompts usually consist of electronic prompts in Electronic Health Records (EHRs) or notes/flags in paper charts. Most EHR provider prompts are automatic pop-up alerts that notify the viewer that the patient is due/overdue for an immunization. Other EHR provider prompts may show up as a "to-do" task, even if the patient is not scheduled that day for an appointment. Many EHRs have provider prompts pre-installed that can be customized in the office. Notes/flags in paper charts must be added manually, after review of the chart for due vaccinations.

**Educate Staff**

Provide staff training about evidence-based communication strategies known to improve vaccine confidence. Ensure they are comfortable addressing questions on immunizations and prompting for all recommended vaccinations at every visit. Designate someone to screen all immunization records before the patient is seen. Training front desk/scheduling staff will also help to ensure that parents are well informed about their child’s immunization needs.