

2010



AAFP Foundation Pfizer Immunization Awards Best Practices Tip Sheet

Each year the American Academy of Family Physicians Foundation Pfizer Immunization Awards Program recognizes family medicine residency programs for identifying and developing creative solutions that overcome barriers to childhood immunizations, and thereby increase immunization rates in the communities in which they live.



Tip 1

Educate Staff and Enhance Administrative Protocols

- Provide physicians and nurses with information about vaccine requirement changes, shortages and recalls.
- Instruct staff to ensure proper administration of each immunization.
- Emphasize the importance of screening and documenting immunizations in order to capture missed opportunities.
- Incorporate information about immunization into monthly provider meetings, conduct quarterly meetings to obtain immunization updates and share immunization reports.
- Form a physician/nurse subcommittee to develop a plan for improving childcare immunizations.
- Partner with other healthcare providers, doctors, nurses, and hospitals and community clinics to help increase immunization rates on a broader level.

Tip 2

Always Accurately Document Immunizations

- Immunize newborns prior to their being discharged from the hospital and mandate immunization screenings at every child's visit.
- Utilize the state immunization registry to streamline patient records and reminders, target under-immunized children and improve immunization rates.
- Increase the number of nursing staff who are trained to use state immunization registry.
- Develop an internal tracking system to help healthcare providers administer appropriate and timely immunizations.
- Establish a process for at least weekly immunization data entry to ensure medical records are up-to-date.
- Reorganize patients' charts so that the immunization history is visible when the file is opened.

Tip 3

Be Consistent with Follow-Up and Reminders

- Create a reminder schedule for routine immunizations and discuss the schedule during each routine office visit.
- Implement an immunization reminder system so that all patients are contacted regularly by phone, e-mail, postcards, and magnets.
- Follow up with parents who have missed appointments to ensure rescheduling.

Tip 4

Accommodate and Motivate Parents

- Offer evening/weekend clinics or provide open scheduling to accommodate parents with busy schedules, as well as those who have missed appointments.
- Participate in the state immunization supply program or the Vaccines for Children Program (VFC) to provide free immunizations to those who qualify.
- Develop an incentive program to entice parents to get their children immunized (e.g. offer free books to patients).

Tip 5

Increase Awareness About the Importance of Immunization

- Incorporate immunization education for parents at each well- or sick-child visit.
- Have language-appropriate materials readily available
- Prepare education packets with information and resources such as the VFC program, and include eligibility criteria.
- Place educational posters in child health care areas and post vaccination schedules at work stations.
- Target parents who do not believe in vaccination to inform them about the benefits of immunization and risks of their decisions.

Case Studies



Best Practices

The Medical College of Wisconsin St. Joseph Family Medicine Residency program in Milwaukee, Wisconsin was one of the recipients of the “Best Practices” awards for overall achievement with existing systems to overcome immunization barriers and achieve high immunization rates in a specific time parameter.

To improve immunization rates the program has developed a system that establishes a benchmark using the Healthy People Report to set the rate (goal increases each year); selects an immunization care manager to champion the effort; utilizes the Wisconsin Immunization Registry and electronic health records; implements a surveillance system that creates immunization reports from the EHR; provides regular updates on requirements and compliance rates at department meetings; has standing orders for immunizations; and provides reminders and incentives for patients and their parents.

This system, dubbed the Childhood Immunization Goal Setting and Taking Action Process, has enabled St Joseph Family Medicine Residency to **maintain average immunization rates of greater than 94% for more than five years!**

Most Improved

The Brooklyn Hospital Center Family Medicine Residency Program in Brooklyn, New York, was one of the recipients of the “Most Improved” awards for overcoming barriers and other challenges to enhance immunization rates within the community.

This program faces many changes with a 30 percent no-show rate and a low socioeconomic, immigrant population. To help overcome these barriers Brooklyn Hospital Center’s Family Medicine Residency program modified policies that were resulting in obstructive appointment systems and long wait times. In addition, the program utilizes the New York State Department of Health Immunization Registry; practices a policy of 24-hour data entry; assigns an exit staff person to each patient; offers parents and providers use of a “language bank” for ease of communication; provides language-appropriate materials to educate parents; provides a language-appropriate final reminder call the night before through an automated calling system; and uses health fairs and mobile vans to enhance immunization education.

As a result of these initiatives, **the program has increased overall compliance rates from 56 percent to 75 percent within one year!**

System Implementation

Howard University Family Medicine Residency Program, in Washington, DC, was chosen as one of the recipients of the “System Implementation” awards, which enables systems to be established that improve childhood immunization rates in medically underserved populations.

The plan to make vast improvements in childhood immunization rates in the community will be accomplished by implementing electronic health records and utilizing the Washington, DC Immunization Registry. Parents and caregivers of under-immunized children will be provided appointment reminders by mail and phone, and alerts will be created in the Electronic Health Record to warn clinicians and nursing staff of delinquent or missed immunizations. The program will also provide biannual immunization training and updates to improve knowledge among residents, nursing staff and clinic staff, and distribute information to patients and their parents to increase awareness about the importance of immunizations.

Following execution of this new system, the program **anticipates an increase from the current overall rate of 32 percent to 81 percent, a 49 percent increase in overall vaccine compliance rates!**

About the AAFP Foundation Pfizer Immunization Awards Program

Winners of the AAFP Foundation Pfizer Immunization Awards, supported by a grant from Pfizer Inc., are chosen for one of the following award categories:

- Best Practices – overall high immunization rates with systems currently in place
- Most Improved – overcoming barriers and challenges to enhance immunization rates
- System Implementation – setting up systems to improve immunization rates in underserved populations

Immunization rates are measured against the benchmark of the National Immunization Survey, U.S. Overall Compliance Rates.

For more details about the awards please visit www.aafpfoundation.org/immunizationawards.

For additional resources visit www.aafp.org/online/en/home/clinical/immunizationres.html.

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