

Each year the American Academy of Family Physicians Foundation Wyeth 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.
- 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 Waco Family Practice Residency Program in Waco, Texas, was one of the recipients of the “Best Practices” award 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 regularly updates the electronic health record module to reflect children’s current immunization status to easily identify missed opportunities. The program also has implemented a standing delegation order that mandates immunization screenings at every child’s visit. Additionally, the program regularly reviews daily immunization compliance reports to provide individual feedback to nurses. Finally, the program distributes patient recall letters to parents of children who are due for well-child visits.

After six months of implementing these best practices, the Waco program successfully **increased well-child visits by 27 percent!**

System Implementation

The University of Alabama at Birmingham Family Medicine Residency in Huntsville, Alabama, was one of the recipients of the “System Implementation” awards to improve immunization rates by addressing documentation and financial barriers.

In order to make vast improvements in the community, the residency program plans to utilize the state immunization registry to accurately track and target under-immunized children. The program also will provide quarterly immunization updates to improve knowledge among clinicians and develop educational packets for parents and expectant mothers to increase awareness of immunizations. Parents and caregivers of under-immunized children will be notified by phone and e-mail so that catch-up appointments can be scheduled. Finally, an immunization clinic will be employed to correct delinquent vaccinations and to provide parents with more flexibility in getting their children immunized.

Following execution of these new systems, **the program anticipates its vaccine compliance rate to increase to 90 percent.**

About the AAFP Foundation Wyeth Immunization Awards Program

Winners of the AAFP Foundation Wyeth Immunization Awards, supported by a grant from Wyeth Vaccines, 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/wyethimmunization.

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

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Most Improved

The Doctors’ Hospital of Michigan Family Medicine Residency Program in Pontiac, Michigan, was one of the recipients of the “Most Improved” awards for overcoming barriers and other challenges to enhance immunization rates within the community.

With a 22 percent “no-show” rate, and a low economic and ethnically diverse population, Doctors’ Hospital faces many challenges. In order to overcome these barriers, the program utilizes the Michigan Care Improvement Registry to target under-immunized children. The program also assigns its staff to conduct follow-up calls to schedule appointment and to reschedule missed appointments so that no child is left unvaccinated. Additionally, the staff arms new mothers with educational materials about immunizations to get them on the right track.

As a result of these initiatives, **the program has increased compliance rates from 69 percent to 87 percent – a 26 percent increase within one year!**