

FAQ on Changes in the NC Immunization Program (NCIP) Information for Parents

RECENT CHANGES IN THE NCIP

1. What changes have occurred in the state program that supplies vaccine to children in North Carolina?

Several changes were made to the program. They are listed below. More detailed explanation is provided throughout this document:

Effective December 1, 2009 through March 31, 2010

- **Name Change:** The name has changed from Universal Childhood Vaccine Distribution Program (UCVDP) to the North Carolina Immunization Program (NCIP). This is because the state will no longer supply all vaccines to all children (or universally).
- **Vaccines Provided for Children birth through 18 years of age:** The NCIP will no longer be able to offer the following vaccines universally, that is, for all children: pediatric hepatitis A vaccine; Tdap (except for the sixth grade requirement and post partum women seen in local health departments); the combination vaccine Pentacel® (DTaP-IPV-Hib) following alleviation of the Hib shortage; the combination vaccine Pediarix® (DTaP-IPVHepB); the combination vaccine Kinrix® (DTaP-IPV), MMRV; and the 2nd dose of varicella vaccine. However, all vaccines recommended by the Advisory Committee for Immunization Practices (ACIP) will continue to be provided by the state for children who qualify for the federal Vaccines for Children (VFC) program. See question 7 below for the definition of VFC eligibility.
- **Local Health Departments may charge Administration Fees:** Local health departments may charge an out-of-pocket administration fee for state-supplied vaccines unless the patient is: 1) uninsured or underinsured and has an income below 200% of the poverty level; or 2) is VFC eligible and states an inability to pay.
- **Definition of underinsured:** A clarification was made by the CDC to the definition of underinsured. The following children are considered underinsured if:
 - they have commercial (private) health insurance but the coverage does not include vaccines*,
 - their insurance covers only selected vaccines (in this scenario, only non-covered vaccines may be provided through VFC), or
 - their insurance caps vaccine coverage at a certain amount - once that coverage amount is reached, these children are categorized as underinsured.

*Note: Children whose health insurance covers vaccinations are not eligible for VFC vaccines, even when a claim for the cost of the vaccine and its administration would be denied for payment by the insurance carrier because the plan's deductible had not been met or because the insurance did not cover the total cost of the vaccine.

Effective April 1, 2010

Some changes effective April 1, 2010 will rescind changes made December 1, 2009

- **Seasonal influenza vaccine (pediatric use)** for the 2010-2011 influenza season will be available only for VFC-eligible children through 18 years of age.

- **Tdap vaccine (pediatric use)** will be available universally (that is, for all children) 10 through 18 years of age. (This rescinds the December 1, 2009 change that stated children 10 through 18 years of age can receive one dose of state-supplied Tdap ONLY to fulfill the 6th grade entry requirement.)
- **Varicella vaccine** (two doses) will be available universally (that is, for all children) 12 months through 18 years of age. (This rescinds the December 1, 2009 change that stated only VFC eligible children could receive two doses of state supplied varicella vaccine).
- **Tdap vaccine (adult use)**—a single dose will be available for two populations:
 - Any person of any age entering a North Carolina college/university (where Tdap is required by NC Immunization Law) for the first time who has never received Tdap. (This rescinds the December 1, 2009 change that stated children 10 through 18 years of age can receive one dose of state-supplied Tdap ONLY to fulfill the 6th grade entry requirement.)
 - Post partum women seen at local health departments if no documentation of Tdap vaccine exists. (This has not changed).

2. When did the changes take place?

The first round of changes took place on December 1, 2009. A second round of changes will go into effect April 1, 2010.

3. Why did these changes take place?

The NCIP received a substantial reduction in state funding for the purchase of vaccines, so it no longer has the funds needed to supply the same vaccines that were provided in the past to all children.

4. What is the impact of these changes?

Fewer vaccines will be provided by the state for all children. All recommended vaccines will continue to be provided by the state for children who qualify for the federal Vaccines for Children (VFC) program.

5. Can all children still receive the required vaccines they need for school?

Yes. All vaccines required for entry to school are still available to all children. However, Hepatitis A vaccine and four combination vaccines will no longer be provided for all children by the state.

State-supplied Pediarix (which protects against diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough, Hepatitis B, and polio); Pentacel (which protects against diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough, polio and Hib disease); Kinrix (which protects against DTaP and polio) and MMRV (which protects against measles, mumps, rubella and varicella) are available for VFC-eligible children only.

If parents of non-VFC-eligible children want their child to receive Hepatitis A vaccine, Pediarix, Pentacel, Kinrix or MMRV, they may do so, if their provider stocks the vaccine. In that case, the patient's health insurance provider would be billed.

As of April 1, 2010, the second dose of varicella vaccine, which is not required for school entry but is recommended for all children, will be available for all children 12 months through 18 years of age.

6. Is Tdap still required for those entering college?

Yes, the Tdap requirement for college has not changed. The state temporarily suspended availability of Tdap vaccine for college entry to students 18 years of age and under who are VFC eligible. As of April 1, 2010, this change will be rescinded. Any person of any age entering a

North Carolina college/university (where Tdap is required by NC Immunization Law) for the first time who has never received Tdap may receive state-supplied Tdap vaccine as of April 1, 2010.

VACCINES FOR CHILDREN (VFC)

7. What is the Vaccines for Children (VFC) program?

The Vaccines for Children (VFC) program is a federally funded vaccine program for eligible children, age 18 and below. VFC is administered at the national level by the CDC which contracts with vaccine manufacturers to buy vaccines at reduced rates. The North Carolina Immunization Branch, within the North Carolina Department of Public Health, administers this program on a state level. The Branch enrolls physicians into the VFC program as part of the NCIP program.

8. Who is eligible to receive vaccine through the VFC program?

Children through 18 years of age that meet at least one of the following criteria are eligible for VFC vaccine:

- Medicaid eligible,
- Uninsured,
- American Indian or Alaskan Native,
- Underinsured children; or
- Unaccompanied minors without proof of insurance presenting to local health department Title X clinics.

INSURANCE

9. How do I know if my insurance covers vaccines?

Providers are required by their contracts to screen patients at every visit for VFC eligibility. This includes determining if the insured patients are underinsured. Underinsured patients (as defined below) may receive state-supplied vaccines.

10. Has the definition of underinsured changed?

According to the CDC, the definition has been clarified rather than changed. The consequences of this clarification will impact providers in the following way: Providers will no longer be allowed to consider patients underinsured when their private insurance plan does not reimburse the provider at 100% of the vaccine cost. Therefore, children who have health insurance but whose insurance covers only a percent of the cost of one or more vaccines are not eligible for the VFC program. For example, the insurance covers 80% of the cost of MCV4. This child would be considered insured for the purposes of the VFC program (and the N.C. Immunization Program), and therefore, not eligible to receive vaccine supplied only for VFC eligible patients. If a family's insurance does not cover a specific vaccine at all, the child is eligible to receive that vaccine at no cost to them through the VFC program.

11. If a patient has to pay a co-pay or meet a deductible, is this considered underinsured?

No.

12. Are children with the Health Choice plan considered VFC-eligible?

No. Health Choice is North Carolina's State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) program. Children enrolled in this program are considered insured.

13. Are all children who have Medicaid as a secondary insurance considered VFC-eligible?

Yes. All children who have Medicaid as a secondary insurance are covered by VFC.

14. If an American Indian/Alaska Native has insurance that covers vaccines (in full or partially) are they considered VFC-eligible?

Yes. American Indian/Alaska natives are eligible to participate in the VFC program regardless of their insurance coverage.