



North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services
Division of Public Health – Women’s & Children’s Health Section

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Private Provider North Carolina Immunization Program (NCIP) Participants

FROM: Beth Rowe-West, RN, BSN
Head, Immunization Branch

SUBJECT: Important: Upcoming Changes to the North Carolina Immunization Program (NCIP)

The purpose of this memo is to inform private provider participants in the NCIP of some important federally-required changes that will take place effective October 1, 2012. Although we do not have complete details on the changes described below, we wanted to provide some basic planning information. Additional details regarding these programmatic changes will be forthcoming in a separate communication.

Serving Underinsured Children

Under the current agreement with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), **underinsured** children are eligible to receive VFC vaccine only through a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) or Rural Health Clinic (RHC). Currently, all NCIP providers have been delegated authority, or “deputized” (through an agreement with the NC Office of Rural Health), to vaccinate underinsured patients. New guidance from the CDC is bringing this practice (deputization) to an end for most private providers, eliminating the ability to serve underinsured patients. According to the CDC, **beginning October 1, 2012, underinsured patients will be able to receive VFC vaccine only at FQHCs, RHCs, and Local Health Departments (LHDs).**

The primary rationale for this federal change is that if VFC expansion to serve underinsured children in all VFC sites (private and public) would continue, there would be no incentive for private health insurance to cover immunizations. The Affordable Care Act mandates health insurance plans cover vaccines administered by in-network providers. The key challenge of the Affordable Care Act is that health insurance companies do not have to cover vaccines for “grandfathered” plans; therefore, it may take several years for much of the population to be covered under the new guidelines.

In the unlikely event that your practice sees only underinsured children, you will need to contact us soon to begin to make plans for no longer receiving our vaccine, and to arrange for the transfer of your stock of state-supplied vaccines.

Screening for underinsured status is particularly important as providers will need to know which children to send to FQHCs, RHCs, and LHDs for their immunizations. Providers will no longer be able to replace doses of VFC vaccine into their private stock when they discover that the patient is underinsured. We apologize for the potential disruption to maintaining your patients’ medical home.

Elimination of Vaccine for Insured Patients

The CDC has also indicated that, effective October 1, 2012, they will restrict the vaccines the NCIP currently provides to vaccinate fully-insured patients of any age. Coverage may continue for some uninsured or underinsured adults for certain vaccine products. Further details on this issue will be provided later as well.

As we receive more information about the changes described above, we will communicate more to our providers. Please use the information that we are providing at this time to discuss how these changes may affect your practice and your patients. If you have questions or concerns about these changes, please contact us at ncirhelp@dhhs.nc.gov

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