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Division of Public Health

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January 9, 2013

MEMORANDUM

TO: North Carolina Immunization Program (NCIP) Providers
FROM: Beth Rowe-West, RN, BSN, Head *BRW*
Immunization Branch
SUBJECT: Reminders Regarding Criteria and Storage Changes Effective January 1, 2013

The purpose of this memo is to remind providers about NCIP program changes, and announce a new requirement related to vaccine storage, effective January 1, 2013.

Coverage criteria and eligibility changes

As you recall, memos were sent a few months ago notifying providers of program changes effective October 1, 2012. See the memo dated August 21, 2012 at: <http://www.immunize.nc.gov/providers/memos.htm>

Regardless of when providers received NCIP vaccines, vaccines must be administered according to coverage guidelines effective January 1, 2013, and all previous versions of the NCIP Coverage Criteria should be discarded. To see the complete coverage criteria document, go to: <http://www.immunize.nc.gov/providers/coveragecriteria.htm>

Additionally, the *Determining Eligibility for VFC Vaccines* flow chart has been updated. There are now two flow charts, one for non-deputized private providers; and one for local health departments (LHDs), Rural Health Centers (RHCs), Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs), and other deputized providers. The flow charts are available at: <http://www.immunize.nc.gov> in the Hot Topics section. These may be helpful in determining who is eligible for VFC vaccine, including who should be referred to deputized providers.

Storage and handling changes

In addition to the above changes, the CDC is requiring that, **effective January 1, 2013, the NCIP will conduct unannounced “spot checks” for proper storage and handling practices in provider offices.** The goal of these visits is to provide guidance and education and to ensure all VFC-eligible children are receiving properly managed vaccines. The CDC recently updated their storage guidance in the *Storage and Handling Toolkit* online at: <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/recs/storage/default.htm>

Remember that all providers are required to designate one primary staff member as the VFC Coordinator and at least one back up vaccine coordinator who is able to perform the same responsibilities as the primary vaccine coordinator. The practice must notify the NCIP at 1-877-873-6247 whenever the primary coordinator changes.

The memo dated November 9, 2012 indicated that **effective February 4, 2013, providers may no longer use dormitory-style refrigeration units at any time to store NCIP vaccines.** NCIP staff may confirm during site visits, and during any other on-site contact, that dormitory-style units are not being used to store NCIP vaccines.

Questions regarding criteria and storage changes should be addressed with your regional immunization nurse (RIN) or by calling the Immunization Help Desk at 1-877-873-6247, and press option 5.

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