



### AIM Recommendations on VFC Seasonal Influenza Vaccine Distribution

Influenza vaccine distribution in the Vaccines for Children (VFC) program is dependent upon the availability of vaccine at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention distribution centers. Unlike distribution of other vaccines, influenza vaccine is seasonal. Providers cannot stock vaccine ahead of demand and may not receive VFC influenza vaccine at the same time they receive privately purchased influenza vaccine. There are many factors impacting the availability of influenza vaccine and the timing of distribution to VFC providers, including the brand and product presentations desired by the provider, the allocation policy of the awardee, the production and shipment schedule of the vaccine, and the tracking of vaccine by both CDC and its distributor McKesson. The timing of VFC seasonal influenza vaccine distribution is slightly different from the timing of private vaccine distribution due to centralized VFC vaccine ordering and distribution and the processes used by CDC to ensure that each awardee receives vaccine equitably. These recommendations are meant to address steps awardees can take to ensure VFC seasonal flu vaccine doses are available to their VFC providers as quickly as possible.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) has received feedback from pediatricians expressing concern about the timing of influenza vaccine distribution in the VFC program. Pediatricians want to be able to serve both privately and publicly insured children as soon as vaccine is available, and to provide protection from influenza for every child regardless of health insurance status. Ideally, pediatricians want to have both VFC and privately purchased influenza vaccine in stock as soon as vaccine is available on the market.

The Association of Immunization Managers (AIM) recognizes that the availability of influenza vaccine and other factors outside the immunization program's control will vary season to season, but offers the following recommendations and guidance to awardees to distribute VFC seasonal influenza vaccine to provider offices early in the influenza season and to reduce missed opportunities for VFC providers to vaccinate against influenza.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Maintain regular communication with provider offices throughout the influenza season on the status and what to expect regarding the timing of vaccine delivery to provider offices.
- Reach out to state and local chapters of provider organizations, such as the American Academy of Pediatrics, to facilitate communication about seasonal influenza vaccine ordering and delivery with providers.
- Create and/or maintain program policies that allow for vaccine distribution to providers as soon as vaccine is available.

*Materials and resources including sample letters, allocation tables, and newsletter inserts can be found on the AIM website in the Resource Library.*

### COMMON AWARDEE DISTRIBUTION PRACTICES

AIM encourages consideration of the following practices to help distribute VFC seasonal influenza vaccine to VFC providers early in the season and provide information to providers as the influenza season progresses:

- Send providers smaller/partial shipments of influenza vaccine throughout the flu season.
- Simplify the brands and presentations of seasonal influenza vaccine available to providers to order. Careful consideration should be given when limiting brand and presentation choice as there is a risk of supply shortages which can be exacerbated if dependent on only one brand of vaccine.
- Regularly communicate with providers regarding the status of influenza vaccine distribution throughout the influenza season.
- Partner with state and local chapters of professional medical organizations.

### EXAMPLES OF COMMON AWARDEE DISTRIBUTION PRACTICES

- Send smaller shipments/partial shipments of vaccine to each provider to help get vaccine to the provider office quickly, and to share the available vaccine with a larger amount of providers. Details of which providers and how much vaccine should be decided based on the needs of each immunization program.
  - Examples of this include:
    - Oregon will provide smaller quantities of each provider's prebook vaccines over time to stretch each CDC allocation to allow for wider coverage of providers with influenza vaccine.
    - Tennessee fulfills orders as vaccine arrives in the depot with frequent small shipments.
    - In Maryland, VFC providers receive 75% of their pre-booked flu vaccine order, but have to specifically request for the remaining 25% of the vaccine. This cuts down on wastage and allows the vaccine to be better allocated to providers who still have patients that need to be vaccinated.
- Simplifying the types of VFC seasonal influenza vaccine available for providers to order. These policies help make flu vaccine distribution easier for the immunization program staff as well as improved timeliness in vaccine distribution and provider satisfaction. It also reduces confusion between providers when one is receiving vaccine, and another provider is not due to a delay in a specific brand or presentation.
  - New York City does not give providers a choice of brand when ordering VFC seasonal influenza vaccine. Providers are asked to indicate how many doses of vaccine they needed for three groups: 6-35 month-olds injectable, 3-18 years injectable, and 2-18 years LAIV. Whatever brand and presentation became available that could fill the provider's request is what the provider received from the immunization program.
  - Maryland also only provides three options for vaccine for providers: FluMist, Sanofi multi-dose vials and Sanofi pediatric syringes.
- Regularly communicating with provider offices throughout the influenza season on the status and what to expect regarding when vaccine would be available and arrive at the provider office.
  - TN sends updates out every 2-3 weeks to first alert providers when supplies will start coming and then to let them know how things are going during the season. Once all pre-book orders have been filled, the program lets providers know how much inventory remains

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- available of which products and allow them to place additional orders at that point through the end of the season on a first-come-first-served order basis.
- Nebraska created and posted a table called “Flu vaccine allocations” on their website which shows each provider (by PIN) what they pre-booked, what they have ordered to date, and thus what is available – all by brand/presentation. This table was updated very frequently during flu season. Providers could reference this table for updates whenever they needed.
  - New York City sends out monthly letters to VFC providers with updates and information about influenza vaccine distribution and vaccine availability.
  - Working with state and local chapters of provider organizations, such as the American Academy of Pediatrics, to facilitate communication about seasonal influenza vaccine ordering and delivery with providers

*Approved by AIM Influenza Committee on September 30, 2015*

*Approved by AIM Executive Committee on September 30, 2015*

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