

October 1, 2008

Dear Childhood Vaccine Providers:

In the past couple of years we have worked together to share the burdens resulting from childhood vaccine purchasing funding cuts, and have kept most Maine children immunized. Without your understanding and support, our work at the Maine Immunization Program (MIP) in Maine CDC/DHHS would have been much harder to keep our program's mission.

As a new year is only a few months away, the MIP has started to plan the vaccine supply for next year. Facing continuous funding cuts and uncertainties of future funding, the MIP decided to further change childhood vaccine supplies for 2009 after input from the State Immunization Advisory Committee.

The changes are based on the following goals: (1) to make ends meet within current funding; (2) to avoid frequent changes in the short term; (3) to ease the complexities in vaccine storage and handling in the provider offices; (4) to reduce unintentional misuse of federal entitlement vaccines; and (5) to eliminate inconvenience for providers and parents from referrals to rural and federally-qualified health centers for vaccination.

The **changes** of vaccine supply starting January 1, 2009 are:

- The MIP will supply **all recommended vaccines to Vaccines For Children qualified (VFC) children only**.
- The new **Pentacel** will be available from the MIP.
- **All providers will have all of these vaccines for all VFC qualified children in any clinical settings.** Uninsured children do not need to be referred to FQHCs or RHCs (Federally-Qualified Health Centers or Rural Health Centers) for these vaccines.

VFC qualified children are the patients who are before their 19<sup>th</sup> birthday and fall into any one of the following categories:

1. Have MaineCare for insurance,
2. Are Native Americans,
3. Have no insurance, or
4. Have insurance but the insurance does not cover the vaccine ('underinsured\*'). According to the federal CDC, "children whose health insurance covers the cost of 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."

**Due to these vaccine supply changes, every child will need to be screened for VFC qualification before the state supplied vaccine is administered.**

We realize that these changes will increase workloads in screening and will put the financial burdens of purchasing vaccines on some providers, especially privately-owned practices.

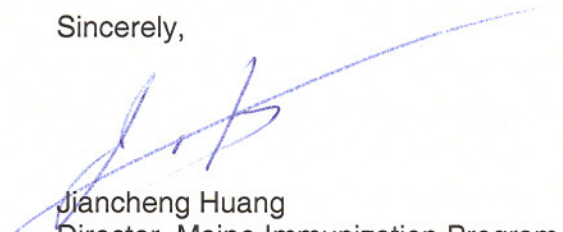
Because of funding shortages and not being able to offer vaccines to all Maine children, we are not allowed to use the funding mechanism that has allowed us to use HMO funds to provide vaccines for children they insure. We therefore ask that you work with insurance companies that carry policies to cover your patients to obtain reimbursement of your vaccine costs and administration fees. This will need to also take effect on January 1, 2009.

Following our joint mission of ensuring Maine children are fully protected from vaccine-preventable diseases, it was very difficult to make these drastic changes. We hope that eventually we can return to universal vaccine coverage for Maine children.


The Immunization Program will be developing new forms and other materials, and will be planning more site visits and communications. We thank you ahead of time for your support through these challenging times.

If you have any comments or questions, please let the Immunization Program know by calling at 1-800-867-4775.

Sincerely,



Jiancheng Huang  
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Maine CDC/DHHS



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Director, Maine CDC/DHHS  
State Health Officer

\* The federal CDC defines "underinsured" as "a child who has commercial (private) health insurance but the coverage does not include vaccines, a child whose insurance covers only selected vaccines (VFC-eligible for non-covered vaccines only), or a child whose insurance caps vaccine coverage at a certain amount. Once that coverage amount is reached, the child is categorized as underinsured." (<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/programs/vfc/providers/elig-scrn-rec-doc-req.htm>).