

Opportunities to Help Increase Vaccination Rates Through Interventions

Trusted Providers for High-Need Communities

FQHCs offer a broad range of health care services—medical, dental, behavioral, and preventative—regardless of patients' ability to pay for services. The vast majority of patients in the communities FQHCs serve have income at or below the Federal Poverty Level.



INTERVENTIONS

Systemic and Operational Obstacles

Challenges

- Immunization information systems may include lack of availability, real-time data access, bi-directional interface capabilities, and registry access across state lines¹
- Providers might be unaware that a patient needs vaccination²
- FQHCs may experience staffing shortages or high turnover rates^{3,4}
- Inventory inefficiencies can create waste of short-dated vaccines or mismatched stock levels¹

Responses

Immunization information systems (IIS) and electronic health record systems (EHR) can help ensure timely vaccinations and consolidate records to allow vaccination personnel to work more efficiently.²

An IIS can contribute by²:

- Supporting patient reminder/recall systems and provider assessment/feedback/reminders
- Facilitating vaccine inventory management and accountability
- Helping with surveillance and determining patient vaccination status

Vaccine reminder systems can be incorporated into prompts to help providers remember which vaccinations a patient needs through²:

- Computer-generated lists of past-due vaccinations
- Electronic or manual reminders on a patient's chart or EHR

Standing orders can be used to²:

- Identify patients eligible for vaccination based on patient-specific factors
- Record patient refusals or medical contraindications
- Record administration of the vaccine and any adverse events



Promoting a **culture of vaccination** in health centers ensures that all staff is aware of and educated on proper vaccination practices and recommendations and prepared to answer patient questions.²



Make a **strong recommendation**, which is a key predictor of a patient receiving a vaccine²



Use **consistent messaging** about the importance of vaccines and vaccine effectiveness and safety²



Implement effective workflow processes to **take advantage of every opportunity to vaccinate**²



Use **Motivational Interviewing** or **SHARE** when discussing vaccines with patients^{2,5}

SHARE helps patients make informed decisions about vaccinations²:

S	SHARE why a recommended vaccine is right for the patient based on age, health status, or lifestyle
H	HIGHLIGHT positive experiences with vaccines to reinforce benefits and strengthen confidence
A	ADDRESS patient questions and concerns about side effects and vaccine effectiveness in plain language
R	REMIND patients that vaccines help protect them and loved ones from common and serious vaccine preventable diseases
E	EXPLAIN the potential costs of getting the disease: serious health effects, missing work or family obligations, and financial costs



INTERVENTIONS

Programs and Funding

Challenges

- FQHCs receive performance-based funds from Health Research Service Administration's (HRSA) Health Center Program. HRSA considers childhood vaccination measures, such as UDS Childhood Vaccination Status, when assessing health center performance, but adult vaccinations are not considered.¹

Responses

- The **Vaccines for Children (VFC) Program** provides vaccines at no cost to uninsured and underinsured children, Medicaid-eligible children, and American Indian or Alaska native children⁶
- Section 317 of the Public Health Service Act provides federally funded vaccines to vaccinate uninsured and underinsured adults.⁶
- FQHCs may be able to access significant discounts on vaccines purchased through the 340B HRSA designated prime vendor, Apexus.¹
- FQHCs may partner with outside groups, such as state **Primary Care Associations (PCAs)**, which may offer additional funding for adult vaccinations.¹
- **Vaccine basics** that provide training and technical assistance around vaccine storage and inventory management systems can help optimize workflow and costs.¹

INTERVENTIONS

Logistics

Challenges

Physical and psychological barriers may limit a patient's ability to access the clinic multiple times to complete a vaccine series. Factors that may result in missed opportunities for vaccination include²:

- Complex vaccination schedules
- Policies of only vaccinating children at well visits
- Not vaccinating siblings at the same visit

Responses

Direct call reminder systems can be used to help bring parents into their primary care provider's office to discuss their child's vaccination status.^{7,8}

- Reminder/recall systems can be used to identify and notify families when children are due for or are behind on recommended vaccinations.
- Phone calls, auto-dialers, mail reminder cards, patient portals, and text messages.

Additionally—extending clinic hours or holding special vaccination events can improve accessibility and vaccine coverage for patient populations who have scheduling or transportation barriers.²



Key Takeaways

FQHCs are uniquely positioned to serve diverse populations¹



Tailor interventions and outreach based on demographics and gaps within the community your health center serves.^{9,10}



Prepare the whole office to discuss and address vaccine concerns with patients, including through the use of patient educational resources.²



Standardize patient data collection in IISs and EHRs to help identify patient vaccination status.²



Leverage existing programs to help with funding or patient support to enhance community health.^{1,2}

Support: When You Need Us, We're Here

Merck can support your vaccination efforts by providing in-person or virtual visits from Merck representatives and continuously hosting materials on [MerckVaccines.com](https://www.merckvaccines.com). We share solutions and offer collaborative support structures—when, where, and how you need them.¹¹

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