

Opportunities & Barriers to Improve Immunization Rates Among Medicaid-Covered Children & Pregnant People: Targeting Medicaid Partnerships Community of Practice (CoP)

Project Overview

Partnerships between Medicaid and Immunization programs are critical to improving immunization rates for children and pregnant people with Medicaid coverage. AcademyHealth, the National Academy for State Health Policy (NASHP), and Immunize Colorado coordinated efforts for a three-year CDC funded cooperative agreement to implement new state-based strategies and policies to address immunization gaps among low-income pregnant people and children. The project's objectives were to make changes to state Medicaid policies or outreach procedures to facilitate vaccination of children living in poverty, implement policies that include providers caring for pregnant people and/or adults as covered vaccinators, and increase utilization of Medicaid resources for Immunization Information System (IIS) sustainability. Embarking on this project at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, CoP state teams faced common challenges including but not limited to staff bandwidth due to COVID-19 response efforts, workforce challenges, vaccine misinformation, and capacity of external partners such as IIS vendors. Wisconsin's Community of Practice (CoP) team was comprised of Medicaid agency, Immunization Unit, and IIS staff.

Wisconsin's individual goals for this project were:

1. Increase vaccine education to pregnant people
2. Increase access to the VFC program for interested providers
3. Increase HPV series completion rates amongst adolescents

Project Successes

Patient & Provider Engagement/Education

- Developed a "Plan to Protect" media campaign. It targeted expectant parents and parents up to age three by offering scientific information about vaccines. The campaign encouraged parents to stay timely or get caught up and utilized a mix of social/traditional media. The campaign was developed in partnership between the WI Immunization Program, the Medicaid agency, and WI American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) Chapter.

- Continued annual collaboration with the WI Well Woman Program to promote the HPV vaccine and cervical cancer screenings. The target population was female adolescents and women in their "middle years" (mother, aunt, grandmother, etc.) who can influence adolescent health. Social media was developed, as well as radio ads to remind people of the importance of getting screened for cervical cancer and getting children vaccinated against HPV. Social media ads were targeted through GIS-Mapping. In 2023, these efforts were continued, with Division of Medicaid Services also promoting cervical health awareness month and the HPV vaccine through targeted messaging to providers and shared social media materials through the Wisconsin ForwardHealth portal.

Stakeholder Collaboration

- Medicaid co-created with the Wisconsin AAP Chapter, the Division of Public Health, and Medicaid Health plan colleagues a communications toolkit related to back-to-school immunization efforts. These tools were disseminated to the public, through social media venues, and were also shared with local health departments. There were three modules tailored for three audiences: the African American/Black community, the Latino/Latinx community, and Rural Residents and all materials were translated into Spanish.
- Collaborated with WIC, Maternal Child Health, the Department of Children and Families (DCF), the Department of Public Instruction and ACOG on a childcare survey. Developed partnerships with Wisconsin state childcare agencies: WIC, Head Start and the DCF in 2022 to establish a relationship to prepare for the 6 months+ COVID-19 vaccine roll-out. Education materials and vaccine communication toolkits were developed for staff from these state agencies to use to assist with vaccine referrals. A survey was created to analyze WIC client's perspective of the COVID-19 vaccine by surveying WIC staff to identify client barriers to receiving the COVID-19 vaccine. Using info gathered from survey, a tailored COVID-19 vaccine FAQ document was developed addressing common themes that WIC staff have heard when assisting clients. The FAQ document was designed to augment WIC staff interactions during client appointments.

Medicaid

- Provided education and training to providers on immunization billing and reimbursement.
- Increased vaccine administration rate to \$15.00 per antigen.
- Created process for annual vaccine reimbursement rate updates.
- Worked towards coverage of vaccine counseling for all vaccines when a vaccine is not given. The goal is to provide additional information so that members may make an educated decision.
- The agency updated their HPV age range from 9-27 years to 9-45 years to allow for collaboration between members and providers who receive patients over 27 years old.

COVID: By the Numbers*

In Wisconsin, 4,386,970 people or 75% of the state has received at least one dose.

Overall, 3,981,606 people or 68% of Wisconsin's population are considered fully vaccinated.

(*All data as of May 17, 2023)

Source: [USAfacts](#)

For more information, please contact [Stephanie Schauer](mailto:Stephanie.Schauer@dhs.wisconsin.gov) (Immunization Program Manager at the Wisconsin Department of Health Services) at Stephanie.Schauer@dhs.wisconsin.gov.