



February/March 2026 | Issue #9

ImmuNews

Wisconsin Vaccines for Children (VFC) Program Newsletter

Vaccine Schedule Resources

DHS continues to endorse childhood vaccine recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP). No changes will be made to vaccine recommendations that protect the health of Wisconsinites from preventable diseases, following the best available scientific and safety data. Wisconsin providers should continue to follow evidence-based vaccine recommendations from AAP and other professional medical organizations, and parents should talk to trusted health care providers about timely vaccination.

Information about recommended vaccine schedules for all Wisconsinites can be found on the DHS webpage [Recommended Vaccination Schedules for Wisconsinites](#). Vaccine information statements (VIS) can be found at immunize.org.

IN THIS ISSUE:

- Respiratory Season Reminders
- New Cooler Return Filers
- Re-enrollment
- Vaccine MythBusters: Hepatitis B
- VFC Vaccine Management Plan
- Updating Contact Information in WIR
- IR Administrator Training Dates
- Spotlight on Immunization QI: HPV Vaccine
- Resources
- Contact Us



Respiratory Season Reminders

End of Maternal RSV Vaccination Season

Seasonal maternal vaccination for RSV ends on January 31. Maternal RSV vaccination is recommended between September 1 and January 31 for those who are 32-36 weeks pregnant.

Please remember to keep any unexpired product that you have left in the refrigerator from the current season, so you have start up stock for next season.

Providers will be notified when ordering for vaccine begins (late summer or early fall) to ensure all organizations have product on hand in time to start vaccinating at the recommended time.



Immunization for infants against RSV continues through March 31. Continue to protect vulnerable infants by administering RSV monoclonal antibody products through the end of the infant administration season.

Respiratory Vaccines

While getting vaccinated against respiratory viruses is important for everyone, it is especially important for young children, older adults, and people with chronic health conditions. DHS encourages everyone 6 months and older to get vaccinated against flu and COVID-19. You can administer both vaccines at the same time. Continue to vaccinate your patients against these viruses. These respiratory illnesses are still widely circulating, and it is not too late to provide protection to your patients.

For infants born to mothers who did not receive the RSV vaccine during pregnancy, DHS recommends those under 8 months old and those 8-19 months with an increased risk of RSV be immunized against RSV.

New Cooler Return Fliers



To help distinguish between the coolers that need to be returned and the coolers that can be recycled, McKesson has updated the flyer that will be included in each cooler container.



As a reminder, there are two types of coolers currently being used to ship VFC vaccine to providers, the EcoFlex coolers and the KoolTemp coolers. Please ensure all EcoFlex coolers are being returned using the label provided to you on the inner flap of the box. Each EcoFlex cooler contains a flyer instructing how to return the cooler for re-use. You can discard the KoolTemp coolers.



VFC Re-enrollment is Coming Soon!

Annual re-enrollment for all VFC providers is anticipated to happen in May. Mark your calendars and watch for a GovDelivery email with more details.

Vaccine MythBusters: Hepatitis B

MYTH: Only babies born to moms with hepatitis B need the vaccine.

FACT:

- Before 1991, only babies born to mothers with hepatitis B were vaccinated, but many infections were missed due to delayed, inaccurate, or overlooked test results.
- Because infants were still getting infected, guidelines changed: now all newborns receive the hepatitis B vaccine at birth for early protection.
- The Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) follows this universal birth dose recommendation.



MYTH: The hepatitis B birth dose isn't safe for newborns.

FACT:

- This vaccine has been given to infants in the U.S. for the past 35 years and has been shown to be very safe.
- Giving the hepatitis B vaccine within 24 hours of birth helps prevent potential transmission from the birth parents and from others in the household. That's why all hospitals in Wisconsin protect newborns by offering them the vaccine.



For more information on debunking immunization myths, please visit these resources:

[WI DHS: Immunizations: Get the Facts About Vaccines](#)

[Vaccinate Your Family: Viral Mythbusting Campaign](#)

[American Academy of Pediatrics: Fact Checked](#)

[Children's Hospital of Philadelphia: Vaccine Education Center](#)

[Vaccinate Your Family: Vaccinate Your Family University](#)



VFC Vaccine Management Plan

A provider [vaccine management plan](#) for participation in the VFC Program should be clear, structured, and aligned with CDC recommendations. Its purpose is to ensure vaccines are stored correctly, administered appropriately, documented accurately, and monitored continuously, while maintaining compliance with federal and state requirements.



Required Pieces of a VFC Vaccine Management Plan

- ✓ Does the plan list the current vaccine coordinator and backup vaccine coordinator?
- ✓ Does the plan address proper vaccine storage and handling practices?
- ✓ Does the plan specify vaccine receiving procedures?
- ✓ Does the plan contain procedures for what to do with vaccine in the event of an emergency?
- ✓ Does the plan contain procedures for vaccine ordering?
- ✓ Does the plan address inventory control (for example, stock rotation)?
- ✓ Does the plan address how to handle vaccine wastage?
- ✓ Does the plan address staff training and documentation on vaccine management, storage, and handling?
- ✓ Does the plan contain a review date that falls within the last 12 months?
- ✓ Does the plan include a process for referral or another option for making non-routine vaccine available for VFC eligible patients to a designated facility for COVID-19 and non-routine vaccines, if needed?
- ✓ Has the plan been signed by the individual responsible for its content?

Knowledgeable staff is critical for program success. Staff that are well trained in program requirements, eligibility screening, vaccine and storage handling, documentation, and reporting.

Updating Contact Information in WIR



Follow the steps outlined below to update or change contact information for your location.

1. Sign into your WIR account **Note: If you are having issues signing in, please contact your IR administrator or the helpdesk for assistance.**
2. Click on **manage sites**.
3. Click on the **plus sign** to select your site.
4. Click on the **basic information** tab to update any clinic information, and the **contacts** tab to update individual contact information.
5. Click **save**. **Note: "site updated" should appear.**

IR Administrator Training Dates

February

Training:

Session 1: Tuesday, February 17, 2026, 9:30 a.m.-noon

Session 2: Wednesday, February 18, 2026, 9:30 a.m.-noon

March

Training 1:

Session 1: Wednesday, March 4, 2026, 1-3:30 p.m.

Session 2: Thursday, March 5, 2026, 9:30 a.m.-noon

Training 2:

Session 1: Monday, March 16, 2026, 1-3:30 p.m.

Session 2: Tuesday, March 17, 2026, 1-3:30 p.m.

To register, please contact the WIR help desk at 608-266-9691 or dhswirhelp@dhs.wisconsin.gov. After you register, we'll provide the details you need to join the training class. If you are no longer able to attend the training, please contact the help desk.



Spotlight on Immunization QI: HPV Vaccination



The HPV vaccine continues to be underutilized, despite the overwhelming evidence of its safety and effectiveness.

Benefits of HPV vaccination at age 9

- Offers more time for completion of the series by age 13.
- Results in a stronger immune response and no evidence of waning protection over time.
- Increases likelihood of providing protection before first HPV exposure.
- Decreases the number of administered shots per visit.
- Decreases questions about sexual activity.
- Has been shown by several health systems to increase HPV series completion rates.
- Widely accepted by health systems, providers, and parents.

Recommendation and evidence:

- Starting the HPV series at age 9 is recommended by the American Cancer Society and American Academy of Pediatrics.
- Changing EMR prompts to alert providers to initiate HPV vaccination at age 9 rather than 11 led to an 8-fold increase in HPV vaccination completion rates by age 13. (4.6% to 35.7%, according to the 2018 Academic Pediatric Association QI project)
- Washington state has seen a significant increase in HPV series completion rates by age 13 since 2022, when they updated IIS forecasting to start routinely vaccinating at age 9.

Resources and additional information:

- [HPV Vaccination Starting at Age 9](#)
- [HPV At Age 9 National Letter](#)
- [HPV Roundtable: Why Age 9 Fact Sheet](#)
- [HPV Vaccinations: 9 Benefits of Starting at Age 9](#) (3-minute video)



Resources



Open Forums

VFC open forum sessions are held once a month as a space to ask questions that you might have about VFC, vaccine ordering, WIR, WIR reports, and more. Please save the following dates for future VFC open forums:

- March 4, 2026, 11:30 a.m.-12:15 p.m.
- April 1, 2026, 11:30 a.m.-12:15 p.m.

In case you missed them, [previous open forums](#) are recorded.

COVID-19 Nuts and Bolts Webinar

On December 10, the WI Immunization Program and the Division of Medicaid Services held a Covid-19 Nuts and Bolts webinar. Topics covered were current COVID-19 vaccination rates, current season vaccine products, storage and handling, VFC considerations, Medicaid updates, communication best practices for providers and some recent findings.

If you missed the event, a [recording](#) is available as well as the [slide deck](#).



Contact Us

Program Contact Information

Immunization Program

DHSImmProgram@wi.gov | 608-267-9959

VFC Program

VFC@wi.gov

WIR Helpdesk

dhswirhelp@wi.gov | 608-266-9691

VFC Site Monitors

Jill Gasperic

VFC Site Monitor—Southeastern Region

Jill.Gasperic@wi.gov | 414-469-0826

Fallon Mercier

VFC Site Monitor—Northeastern Region

Fallon.Mercier@wi.gov | 920-448-4802

Brianna Murnan

VFC Site Monitor—Southern Region

Brianna.Murnan@wi.gov | 608-695-4070

Central Staff

Jackie Nelson

Vaccine Unit Supervisor

Jackie.Nelson@wi.gov | 608-266-1506

Ashley Sarbacker

VFC Coordinator

Ashley.Sarbacker@wi.gov | 608-266-2346

Teema Carpenter

Immunization Coordinator

Teema.Carpenter@wi.gov | 608-266-3125

Dawn Howard

VFC operations Associate

Dawn.Howard@wi.gov | 608-261-0230

Imm Program Regional Advisors

Eau Claire Regional Office

Shayna Nickell

Western Regional Advisor

Shayna.Nickell@wi.gov | 715-836-4028

Green Bay Regional Office

Susan Nelson

Northeastern Regional Advisor

SusanL.Nelson@wi.gov | 920-448-5231

Milwaukee Regional Office

Monica Thakur

Southeastern Regional Advisor

Monica.Thakur@wi.gov | 414-322-0314

Rhineland Regional Office

Christie Larmie

Northern Regional Advisor

Christie.Larmie@wi.gov | 715-365-2709

Southern Regional Office

Thanee Xiong

Southern Regional Advisor

Thanee.Xiong@wi.gov | 608-267-9391

IQIP Advisors

Lanya Hibbler

IQIP Advisor

Lanya.Hibbler@wi.gov | 608-334-3042

Brianna Murnan

IQIP Advisor

Brianna.Murnan@wi.gov | 608-695-4070