

## PA Vaccines for Children (VFC) Program

The Vaccines for Children (VFC) program was created as part of the Federal Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (OBRA), Section 1928 of the Social Security Act, in August 1993. The purpose of this program is to improve immunization levels across the U.S. by providing vaccines, at no cost, to enrollment public and private providers. The program is regulated by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the National Center of Immunizations and Respiratory Disease (NCIRD).

In October 1994, Pennsylvania began its VFC program under the administration of the Department of Health (DOH), Division of Immunization. VFC vaccines are purchased through CDC contracts by the DOH and are supplied to VFC enrolled providers at no cost.

### Contact information

Pennsylvania Department of Health (PADOH)  
Division of Immunizations  
625 Forster St., Room 1026  
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Toll Free: 1-888-646-6864

Phone: 717-787-5681

Fax: 717-214-7223

Fax: 717-441-3800 or 717-441-3777

Email: [paimmunizations@pa.gov](mailto:paimmunizations@pa.gov)

Website Link: <https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/programs/immunizations/Pages/VFC.aspx>

Pennsylvania VFC Program Handbook:

<https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/Documents/Programs/Immunizations/2019%20VFC%20Handbook.pdf>

### VFC eligibility

Children, birth through 18 years of age (to their 19<sup>th</sup> birthday), are eligible for VFC vaccines if they meet at least one of the following criteria:

- Are enrolled in Medicaid (including Medicaid managed care plans)
- Have no health insurance
- American Indian or Alaska Native (regardless of insurance coverage)
- Underinsured: A child who has health insurance, but the coverage does not include vaccines; a child whose insurance covers only selected vaccines (VFC eligible for non-covered vaccines only).

**Note:** Underinsured children are eligible to receive VFC vaccine only through a federally qualified health center (FQHC), rural health clinic (RHC) or a state health center (SHC) under an approved deputization agreement.

Children with health insurance that covers vaccines and who fail to meet one of the previously mentioned criteria are **not eligible** through the VFC program, even when the insurance requires a deductible. There are no income restrictions imposed by the VFC program, as long as the child meets all other enrollment criteria.

**Insured children**

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 (high deductible plan) had not been met. Children with the Pennsylvania's Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) are not eligible for VFC vaccine.

VFC Eligibility Scenario: Child is insured and...	Insurance Status	VFC Eligible
Has not yet met plan's deductible	Insured	No
Plan covers all ACIP recommended vaccines but excludes certain products/combination vaccines	Insured	No
Plan covers only a portion of the vaccine cost and does not have Medicaid as secondary insurance	Insured	No
Has Medicaid as secondary insurance	Medicaid eligible	Yes
Plan covers only a portion of the vaccine cost and has Medicaid as secondary insurance	Medicaid eligible	Yes
Has not yet met plan's deductible and has Medicaid as secondary insurance	Medicaid eligible	Yes
Has exceeded plan's annually allowed number of provider visits or insurance doesn't cover vaccines	Underinsured- must obtain vaccine through FQHC, RHC, or deputized SHC	Yes
Cannot access health insurance due to being incarcerated	Uninsured	Yes

A Medicaid eligible child is eligible for PA VFC vaccines regardless if they have any other type of primary health care coverage/insurance plan.

CHIP children are insured and not eligible for PA VFC vaccine unless a vaccine is not covered by CHIP insurance, which would make the children, underinsured and should receive vaccines at FQHCs or RHCs.

For complete eligibility requirements please visit the [PA VFC Program Handbook](#).

### New provider enrollment

- Complete and submit the Pa. Vaccines for Children Program Provider Agreement (Pa. VFC PPA) by fax to 717-214-7223.
- Upon receipt of the completed Pa. VFC PPA, the provider identification number (PIN) will be assigned to your facility.
- A copy of the [PA VFC Program Handbook](#) will be mailed to your facility; This should be reviewed by the physician(s), office manager, primary and backup VFC contacts prior to the enrollment/training site visit.
- Prepare your office and staff for a site visit to go over the administrative requirements of the program and to ensure proper storage and handling of vaccines when received.
- An immunization nurse from your district will contact you to schedule an enrollment/training site visit to review all aspects of the VFC program, to ensure that the vaccine storage units and thermometers meet the requirements of the CDC and to answer any questions staff may have. This visit takes approximately two hours.
- After completion of the enrollment/training visit, the immunization nurse will notify the PADOH that your facility has been approved to order and receive VFC vaccines.
- VFC staff will notify the PA Statewide Immunization Information System (PA-SIIS) to provide the primary and back-up VFC coordinators with unique usernames and passwords referred to as “logon credentials.” This will allow staff to order vaccines online, update facility address and list vaccine shipping hours.
- View the video “Keys to Storing and Handling Your Vaccine Supply” and printing credentials from the CDC website. This is required for all new enrollments and re-activations. The video is found at the following sites:  
<https://www2a.cdc.gov/vaccines/ed/shvideo/>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0atwOngjVQY>

### Provider requirements:

- Administer VFC program vaccines to VFC-eligible children;
- Retain all VFC documentation including patient eligibility screening records for a minimum of three years;
- Make immunization records available to the PADOH, upon request and during CDC required site visits;
- Comply with the appropriate immunization schedule, dosage and contraindications established by the CDC’s Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP);

- Document and retain parent/guardian/individual refusal/rationale for not having client immunized ([AAP-Refusal-to-Vaccinate](#));
- Provide current vaccine information statements ([VIS](#)), maintain records in accordance with the National Childhood Vaccine Injury Act and provide, according to federal law, all vaccine providers must give patients, or their parents or legal representatives, the appropriate VIS whenever a vaccination is given.
- Not to impose a charge for the cost of the vaccine to any eligible patient;
- Not to impose a charge for the administration of the vaccine in any amount higher than the maximum fee of **\$23.14** for non-MA enrolled children
- Not to deny administration of a vaccine to a child due to the inability of the child's parent/guardian/individual of record to pay an administrative fee;
- Not to send to collections for lack of payment of administration fee;
- Comply with VFC program procedures and requirements; and
- Adhere to all federal and state requirements.

For complete provider requirements including provider annual enrollment and PA VFC compliance site visits please visit the [PA VFC Program Handbook](#).

### Provider responsibilities

- Notify PADOH regarding changes
  - Change in facility name
  - Change in facility address
  - Change in facility telephone or fax number
  - Change in primary VFC contact
  - Change in back-up VFC contact
  - Change in medical director/primary physician
- Staff training
  - Provide internal training on proper vaccine storage and handling guidelines.
  - Provide internal training on vaccine administration protocols to each new employee at time of employment orientation and review annually.
  - Document these trainings and those who attended as required.
- Developing and maintaining written procedures
  - Emergency handling procedures
  - Vaccine management plan
  - Vaccine disaster recovery plan
- Twice-daily temperature documentation
  - Time when temperature was checked
  - Initials of staff checking unit temperature
  - Current, min, and max temperature
  - Corrective action documentation on the temperature log (if needed)
- Vaccine storage and handling
  - CDC/PADOH requirements/recommendations

- Equipment (refrigerators/freezers)
- Thermometers/digital data loggers
- Maintenance of cold chain

### Withdrawing from the VFC program

To assure a smooth transition of services, the following steps must be taken should a facility choose to discontinue participating in the Pa. VFC Program.

- **Notify the Pa. VFC program 30 days in advance at (1-888-646-6864)** if the office plans to dis-enroll.
- Submit a complete inventory of all Pa. VFC vaccines on-site to include brand, lot number, expiration date and number of doses.
- Submit three months of temperature logs.
- Refer VFC-eligible children to another VFC Provider. If necessary, contact the PADOH for help finding another VFC provider.
- Document and retain parent/guardian/individual refusal/rationale for not having client immunized (AAP-Refusal-to-Vaccinate);
- For sites disenrolling, vaccine will be picked up based on field staff availability.

### Fraud waste and abuse

The Pa. VFC Program recognizes that a vast majority of VFC providers abide by their legal and professional duties and provide critical health care services to VFC patients every day. The Pa. VFC Program is committed to safeguarding federally funded vaccines by targeting fraud perpetrators and saving taxpayer dollars while reducing the burden on legitimate providers.

The comprehensive program to prevent and detect fraud, waste and abuse consists of:

- Procedures for the identification of potential fraud, waste and abuse in the Pa. VFC Program;
- A process to conduct a timely, reasonable inquiry into potential violations of federal and state criminal, civil and administrative laws, rules and regulations; and
- A process to refer potential violations of applicable federal and state criminal, civil and administrative laws, rules and regulations to law enforcement for further investigation within a reasonable period.

### Vaccine management

- Post a vaccine expiration list on the refrigerator and freezer.
- Check and rotate inventory on a weekly basis.
- Administer shorter-dated vaccines first.
- Notify immunization nurses to assist in relocating vaccines expiring in 90 to 120 days to avoid waste.
- Deplete current single antigen vaccine inventory prior to switching to a combination antigen vaccine.

Vaccines available through the PA VFC program:

- Diphtheria, Tetanus and Acellular Pertussis (DTaP)
- Haemophilus Influenza Type b (Hib)
- Hepatitis A (Pediatric)
- Hepatitis B (Pediatric)
- Human Papillomavirus (HPV)
- Influenza
- Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR)
- Meningococcal Conjugate (MCV4)
- Meningococcal B
- Pneumococcal Conjugate 13 (PCV13)
- Pneumococcal Polysaccharide (PPSV23)
- Polio (IPV)
- Rotavirus
- Tetanus and Diphtheria (Td)
- Tetanus, Diphtheria and Acellular Pertussis (Tdap)
- Varicella
- Several Combination Vaccines

In addition, the following non-VFC vaccines are available by request for department-approved public providers, including state health centers, county and municipal health departments, federally qualified health centers, rural health clinics and other public providers as approved by the PADOH:

- Hepatitis A (adult)
- Hepatitis B (adult)
- Human papillomavirus (HPV - adult)
- Measles, mumps and rubella (MMR - adult)
- Meningococcal conjugate (MCV4 - adult)
- Meningococcal B (adult)
- Pneumococcal conjugate 13 (PCV13 - adult)
- Pneumococcal polysaccharide (PPSV23 - adult)
- Tetanus and diphtheria (Td - adult)
- Tetanus, diphtheria and acellular pertussis (Tdap - adult)
- Varicella (adult)

For complete vaccine management instructions please refer to the [PA VFC Program Handbook](#)

NOTE: As new vaccines or combination vaccines are approved by the FDA, they will be made available by the [CDC](#).

### Vaccine ordering

Vaccine orders are placed online using PA-SIIS or by faxing a PA Department of Health Supplied Vaccine Order, Inventory, and Accountability form to 717-441-3800 or call 1-888-646-6864.

- Order monthly: first thru 15th.
- Order only one month's supply of vaccine, based on projected patient schedule
- Order by number of doses, **conforming to package size**
- Order according to type of facility (private providers are allowed to only pediatric vaccines; public providers may order pediatric and adult)

For complete ordering vaccines instructions and shipping information please refer to the [PA VFC Program Handbook](#).

### Returning vaccines

All vaccines, including flu, deemed “returnable non-viable” should be returned within six months following expiration date. However, vaccines that have expired more than six months previously will still be accepted. When requesting a shipping label for the return of vaccines, please allow one to five business days to receive notification. Complete the vaccine return and accountability form for returning all vaccines.

Vaccines may be returned when:

- Expiration date has passed and unopened.
- Failure to store or handle properly (e.g., vaccine left out overnight, not put away upon arrival)
- There is a mechanical failure (refrigerator/freezer failure) - must complete incident report);
- There is a power outage/natural disaster (must complete incident report);
- The refrigerator/freezer is too warm (must complete incident report);
- The refrigerator/freezer is too cold (must complete incident report);
- There is spoilage of vaccine in transit (must complete incident report).

For complete returning vaccines instructions please reference the [PA VFC Program Handbook](#).

### Vaccine storage and handling

Any new providers enrolling in the VFC program will be required to use standalone refrigerators and standalone freezers for vaccine storage. PADOH-approved household combination units are no longer permitted for new enrollment and/or replacement unit purchases.

PADOH-supplied vaccine must be stored in one of the following:

- Standalone storage units (medical/pharmaceutical grade, highly recommended);
- Medical/pharmaceutical grade combination units; or

For complete storage and handling instructions please reference the [PA VFC Program Handbook](#).