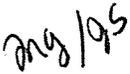




Memorandum

TO: Directors, Health Service Regions
Immunization Program Managers, Health Service Regions
Directors, Local Health Departments
Immunization Program Managers, Local Health Departments

FROM: Karen Hess, Manager 
Vaccine Services Group

THRU: Jack C. Sims, Manager 
Immunization Branch

DATE: May 5, 2010

SUBJECT: Texas Vaccines for Children Program: Choice Implementation

Regional and local health departments are encouraged to share the following message with all clinics enrolled in the Texas Vaccines for Children (TVFC) or adult safety net vaccine programs.

In 2009, during the 81st Legislature, House Bill 448 was introduced that requires the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) to offer a provider choice system for the Texas Vaccines for Children (TVFC) and adult safety-net vaccination programs. This law becomes effective September 1, 2010, and will allow providers to select brand and presentation of vaccines.

Over the next few months, the DSHS Immunization program will begin to introduce programmatic changes and/or tools that will help to transition providers to vaccine choice. In order to minimize provider workload, and manage vaccine ordering and reporting more effectively, the program plans to incorporate electronic solutions, the development of which may extend into 2011.

The following information outlines: choice law; provider requirements; procedural changes; and provider resources.

CHOICE LAW

The law requires DSHS to allow TVFC and adult safety-net providers to select any licensed vaccine and associated presentation that is:

- Recommended by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP)
- Available through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and
- If an adult safety-net vaccine, is listed on the approved adult safety net vaccine list.

The law has two limitations: (1) DSHS must offer a vaccine for choice only if the cost does not exceed 115 percent of the lowest-priced equivalent vaccine; and, (2) choice of products does not apply in the event of a disaster or public health emergency, terrorist attack, hostile military or paramilitary action, or extraordinary law enforcement emergency.

WHAT IS NEEDED FROM PROVIDERS

Vaccines Choices

The first step for vaccine choice is to obtain information on vaccine choices by brand and presentation. This information will be collected using an online survey tool similar to the process used to place annual influenza orders. The survey is expected to be available to providers beginning in mid-May 2010.

Storage Capacity Validation

Based on the selected vaccine brands/presentations and the maximum stock level (MSL) for each vaccine, you will need to verify that you have adequate refrigerator/freezer capacity to properly store the vaccines. A tool will be provided that can be used to evaluate adequate storage based on brand, presentation and quantity (MSL).

Provider Choice Agreement

In order to assure that the every provider is informed about the opportunity to choose vaccines, DSHS is developing a Provider Choice Agreement that summarizes the choice guidelines. This agreement must be signed by the enrolled TVFC provider (the same person who signs the Enrollment Form) by August 31, 2010. Missing the deadline could result in a delay in receiving future vaccine orders.

WHAT WILL CHANGE FOR PROVIDERS

Paper to Electronic Reporting:

DSHS is developing an electronic reporting format that allows you to order and submit required vaccine reports via the internet. The automation is expected to positively impact your practice by pre-populating information such as previous month's inventory, vaccine brand and presentation choices, MSL and recommended order amounts. The system will be in various stages of development and implementation through 2011.

In order to utilize the new automated system, providers will need access to the internet. Each site will be assigned a username and password upon registration. In order to receive communication and information back from the system, you will also need an email account. If your office does not have access to the internet/email, you are encouraged to start that process.

WHAT ASSISTANCE WILL BE PROVIDED

Communication

As additional information on the transition to choice becomes available in the following weeks, further communication will be forthcoming.

Training

Over the next two months, you will be asked to participate in choice training session(s) on the vaccine ordering and reporting, and other process changes. This training will be offered by your assigned local health department or health service region immunization representative.

Website

As information, tools, and training are developed and distributed, they will be added to the www.immunizetexas.com website under "Vaccine Choice". Providers should visit this site to access the most current choice information and resources.

Helpdesk

As the transition to provider choice progresses, DSHS plans to establish a helpdesk where providers can call for general questions on automated ordering and reporting processes.

We appreciate your support in this choice transition effort, and are committed to making it as simple as possible. Future communications will be forthcoming as additional information becomes available.