

Pediatrician Immunization Survey  
Nevada Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics  
And  
Southern Nevada Health District  
Results

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#### Introduction

The Nevada Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Southern Nevada Health District jointly developed and conducted a brief, rapid immunization survey to learn about some of the potential impacts on immunization practices and delivery in the District due to the recent changes in State policy for the Statewide Immunization Program.

#### Methodology

A brief survey was developed and pre-tested. The survey was designed as a telephone survey, with an option for the survey to be faxed or emailed. The SNHD and NCAAP sent an announcement about the survey encouraging participation to all of the pediatricians on the lists. Recognizing that some practices included multiple providers, the survey elicited information on the number of providers in a practice, but the survey was administered only once per practice. Results were weighted for the number of providers in the practices.

The NCAAP provided a membership roster of all pediatricians, and the SNHD complemented that list with a list of all VFC providers enrolled in the District. SNHD immunization nursing staff conducted the phone survey during the week of February 2-6, 2009. We did not conduct a follow up survey of non-responders.

#### Results

The NCAAP roster included 184 pediatricians, and the VFC provider list included 155 pediatricians: 57 pediatricians were on both lists. We were able to obtain responses from a total of 95 pediatricians from 35 practices.

Were you a participant in the State Immunization Program in 2008? Yes = 94 No = 1

Are you aware of the changes taking place beginning January 1, 2009 in the State Immunization Program? Yes = 95 No = 0

Are you planning to participate in the State Immunization Program for 2009? Yes = 94 No = 1  
Are you a VFC provider? Yes = 94 No = 1

Have you been provided information about the possibility of being designated as a Federally Qualified Health Center Provider? Yes = 89 No = 5 Unknown = 1

Have you signed up to be a FQHC provider? Yes = 58 No = 37

Do you intend to enroll as a FQHC provider? Yes = 59 No = 3 Uncertain = 33

Do you anticipate any adverse impact to your practice as a result of the changes to the Statewide Immunization Program? Yes = 72 No = 21 Uncertain = 2

Do you plan to continue to provide childhood vaccines to your patients? Yes = 94 No = 1

Have you placed any new orders for childhood vaccines so you can vaccinate children who are not VFC eligible? Yes = 89 No = 6

#### Comments from respondents:

- See mostly private patients in my practice
- Concerned that practice will lose money
- Will not order MCV4 or HPV vaccine
- Concerned reimbursement will not cover costs
- Worry this will be a huge financial and logistical barrier on my office and patients
- Will continue to provide only some of the vaccines, not all

#### Discussion

The results of the survey show that there is almost universal awareness of the changes in the State Immunization Program among the pediatricians who responded to the phone survey, and almost all pediatricians who responded planned to continue to participate in the program in 2009. Most of the pediatricians had been provided information about the possibility of becoming a FQHC designated provider, and 58 (61%) of 95 had signed up or enrolled. At the time of the survey, 33 (35%) of the 95 pediatricians were uncertain if they would enroll as a FQHC designated provider.

Of concern was the finding that 72 (76%) of the 95 pediatricians responded that they anticipated adverse impacts on their practice, and no pediatricians offered any positive statements welcoming the changes or indicating that they believed the changes would improve the program. In spite of these reservations and concerns, 94 of 95 pediatricians responded that they were planning to continue to provide vaccines to their patients, although several said they would have to limit the vaccines they provided. Of the 95 pediatricians, 89 (94%) said they had placed new orders for childhood vaccines so they could vaccinate children who are not VFC eligible. This response was somewhat surprising as information from local drug representatives did not confirm an increase in vaccine orders from local providers in the District.

The SNHD learned important lessons from conducting the survey. The rosters provided by the NCAAP included many retired pediatricians who were no longer in practice and many pediatric residents who were completely unaware of the existence of the VFC program or the policies regarding vaccine provision and funding in medical practice. Although there was widespread support for conducting the survey, obtaining telephone responses from practicing pediatricians proved difficult, because they were busy seeing patients and were often unable to answer the phone to complete the survey. Feedback provided many areas for future improvement in survey design and procedural details. Future surveys can be improved, and new methods of rapidly obtaining information about office practice can be tested and refined.

#### Summary

Pediatricians were aware of the changes in the State Immunization Program. Almost all planned to continue to provide vaccines to their patients, and a majority was concerned that the changes will adversely affect their practices and their patients. The major strategy proposed to assure continued access to vaccinations is the designation of pediatricians as FQHC providers. At the time of the survey, only 62 % of the pediatricians had enrolled as an FQHC provider, and many were uncertain if they would sign up in the future. Careful attention to the effectiveness of this proposed solution will be essential, and alternate plans need to be developed should this strategy prove to be ineffective.