



Immunization program publishes its 100th issue

When the Office of Public Health (OPH) Immunization Program published its first COVID-19 Update on February 5, 2021, COVID shots were relatively new and eligibility for the vaccine was expanding for the first time. At that time, nearly 535,000 shots had been administered, almost exclusively to nursing home residents and healthcare workers.

Several days after publication, COVID-19 vaccination eligibility was expanded to all people 65 and older, essential COVID response personnel, police and other first responders. More than two years later, the newsletter has evolved to be more than a COVID publication. Now called the Immunization Update, it has become the primary source of news and information for all things vaccine-related.



Today, March 2, marks the 100th issue of the publication that has kept providers and other readers informed about vaccines, storage and handling requirements, Centers for Disease Control (CDC) updates, new and emerging vaccine-preventable illnesses and many other topics.

We are delighted by this milestone publication and the work of the team members who meet the weekly deadlines and those who contribute ideas and articles. Our editor is the Immunization Program's Health Equity Communication Coordinator, Jourdan Barnes. I want to recognize his leadership in taking what was once a very specialized publication to new levels weekly.

Javone Davis
Interim Director, OPH Immunization Program

Miss Louisiana receives her COVID-19 booster

On Saturday, February 25, Miss Louisiana, Zuwena Easterling, received her COVID-19 booster at Region 4's Love Yourself vaccination event.



The occasion was held at Dupuis Recreation Center in Lafayette, Louisiana, and was hosted by Well-Ahead Louisiana. Ms. Easterling proudly encouraged eventgoers to get COVID-19 vaccinations, admitting to barely feeling the needle. With her mom being a nurse and former flight medic in the military, it's no wonder Ms. Easterling is taking charge of her health.

LDH is proud of our Miss Louisiana for building stronger communities and stronger immunities.

"The Immunization Update has done a tremendous job ensuring timely, informative and necessary information is shared weekly with our providers, partners and networks. From exclusively delivering critical news about COVID-19 to covering an array of vaccine-related topics, I am proud to say the Immunization Update is a tool I use faithfully. Congratulations on the 100th issue!"

- Dr. Chaquetta Johnson, DNP, MPH, WHNP-BC, OPH Interim Deputy Assistant Secretary

CDC warns of increase in drug-resistant stomach bug



On February 24, CDC released an official Health Advisory alerting the public about an increase in extensively drug-resistant [shigellosis](#) in the United States.

There are limited antimicrobial treatments available for these particular drug-resistant strains of Shigella, and it's also easily transmissible, warned CDC in the Friday advisory. It can also spread antimicrobial resistance genes to other bacteria that infect the intestines.

Shigella infections, known as shigellosis, can cause:

- fever
- abdominal cramping
- tenesmus (Cramping pain in the rectal area)
- diarrhea that is bloody

A fecal-oral route, person-to-person contact, and contaminated food and water can spread the bacteria.

Shigellosis affects young children, but CDC says they are seeing a rise in cases in adults – especially in men who

have sex with men, people experiencing homelessness, international travelers and people living with HIV.

To learn more about Shigella and to find shareable resources [click here](#).

Assessing barriers to vaccination in New Orleans

In 2022, the New Orleans Health Department (NOHD) was selected to participate in CDC-funded Equipping Local Health Departments to Address Vaccine Hesitancy project.

This project provided funding for three local health departments to hire a consultant, conduct [CDC's Rapid Community Assessment \(RCA\)](#) to better understand vaccine hesitancy and develop a plan to increase vaccine uptake in selected communities.

Please review the case study [here](#) to learn about how the NOHD conducted the RCA, barrier analysis and results.

"The Immunization Program has done a remarkable job in planning, implementing and monitoring COVID-19 vaccine distribution efforts for well over two years. This weekly newsletter continues to be a critical platform to communicate key updates to providers and others—congratulations on reaching this milestone!"

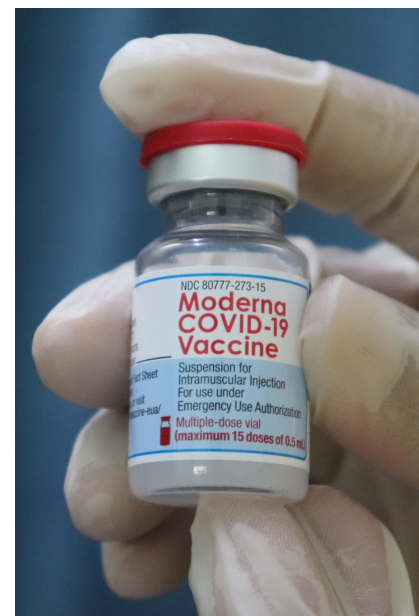
- DeAnn Gruber, Director, OPH Bureau of Infectious Diseases

Moderna monovalent COVID vaccine—expiry/stock-out alert

The Moderna-10 and Moderna-5 monovalent products for individuals aged six and older are set to expire in **early April**. There will not be any additional shelf-life extensions for these products.

The Moderna 6-11 and 12+ monovalent products ordered in the next few weeks will be short-dated, with expirations in early April. However, the U.S. government will accept orders for Moderna monovalent vaccines through March 13 to support primary series vaccinations. After March 13, providers must order alternative vaccines from Pfizer (ages six and older) and Novavax (ages 12 and older) for individuals seeking monovalent, primary series vaccines.

In anticipation of the upcoming expiration of Moderna's monovalent vaccines for people ages six and older, providers should be aware that depending on the date of the first Moderna dose, the same product may not be available to complete the primary series. In this case, a different COVID-19 vaccine may be administered to complete the primary series at a minimum interval of 28 days from the last COVID-19 vaccine dose.



Week 7 FluView report

Seasonal influenza is steadily declining in Louisiana but remains a threat; keep encouraging vaccination. Click below for key points summarizing FluView data and other relevant flu-related information.

In Louisiana during Week 7:

- **2.0%** of patient visits reported through the U.S. Outpatient Influenza-like Illness Surveillance Network (ILINet) were due to influenza-like illness (ILI).
- This percentage is **below the regional baseline** of 3.9%.
- The ILI case definition changed starting with the 2021–2022 season: fever >100.3 AND cough and/or sore throat.

Cumulative 2022–23 influenza vaccinations statewide:

1. Flu vaccines given to individuals 0–17 years of age: **143,628**
2. Flu vaccines given to individuals 18+ years of age: **646,279**

[FluView Report Week 7](#)



The Vax Matters podcast: Where it all started



The OPH Immunization Program is excited to announce that we have additional ways to be immune from misinformation with the OPH Vax Matters podcast. Instead of having to search podcast sites, Vax Matters can now be found on the Louisiana Department of Health's (LDH's) YouTube channel. Click [here to subscribe](#) and be notified when new episodes have been uploaded.

In honor of our 100th Immunization Update issue, the OPH Immunization Program is highlighting our first-ever Vax Matters, *Covid-19 Vaccine* episode with Dr. Joseph Kanter, state health officer. In this episode, Dr. Kanter talks about the COVID-19 pandemic from end to end, including the development of the vaccine and its social impact.

Jump to the episode [here](#).

Be sure to **like, comment and share** your favorite episodes of the Vax Matters podcast and be a part of the 1000+ listeners nationwide.

Vax Matters is now expanding to include topics other than vaccines. If you are interested in being a guest on Vax Matters, send a note to Jourdan Barnes at jourdan.barnes@la.gov. Include your contact information and the subject you would like to discuss.



Medicaid eligibility is changing. Help your patients maintain their coverage.



In a recent message, Medicaid executive director Tara LeBlanc explained how her program is preparing for the end of continuous Medicaid coverage that coincides with the end of the federal COVID-19 Public Health Emergency.

LeBlanc wrote, "Beginning in April, a Medicaid member could lose their health insurance coverage even if they are eligible if they do not respond to letters they received in the mail. These letters will direct members to verify their contact information, including cell phone numbers and email addresses."

Healthcare providers are asked to help spread the word about this eligibility requirement. In addition, your Medicaid patients should go to <https://ldh.la.gov/page/4454> for a list of ways to make contact information updates.

Please remind your patients about the importance of reading and responding to mail from Medicaid. Thank you for helping to spread the word about this critical issue.

"The Immunization Update publication has been key in updating providers with new vaccination recommendations. With new issues released weekly, trusted information comes to providers on a consistent basis, giving them a source they can count on."

- Rafe Hewett, MHS, CDC Public Health Advisor

COVID-19 vaccination under review by CDC's ACIP

Last Friday, CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) met to review the latest data on COVID-19 vaccine effectiveness, safety and coverage, and discuss potential updates to future COVID-19 vaccination efforts.

Although no changes to existing COVID-19 vaccination recommendations were made, CDC and ACIP members upheld plans to:

- Streamline and simplify COVID-19 vaccine recommendations this fall.
- Any future changes to COVID-19 vaccine composition and immunization schedules will follow a rigorous, science-based process that factors in the most recent data on the epidemiology of the COVID-19 pandemic and SARS-CoV-2 variants, as well as on the safety and effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccines.

CDC data show that the currently recommended COVID-19 vaccines effectively prevent severe disease, hospitalization and death. For those who have already received their primary series, an updated (bivalent) COVID-19 vaccine is an important option to help restore protection that may have waned since the previous vaccination, especially for older people and those with underlying conditions at higher risk.

The Immunization Program continues to encourage the residents of Louisiana who have not yet been vaccinated—or have not yet completed their COVID-19 vaccine primary series—to do so as soon as possible to protect themselves from a more severe illness. In the U.S.:

- Only about 5% of children younger than five have completed the COVID-19 vaccine primary series.
- Just over 32% of children between the ages of five and 11 years have received their primary series.
- Among young adults, nearly 34% of people between the ages of 18 and 24 have yet to receive their primary series.
- An updated COVID-19 vaccine is an important option to help restore protection that may have waned since previous vaccination. This is particularly true for older people and those with underlying health conditions who are at higher risk.

Cultivating Gen Z as Partners for Healthier Communities: Part 2

ASTHO will host a virtual conversation on effective communication strategies for rebuilding trust in public health and engaging Gen Z as public health advocates on [Monday, March 13, at 12:00 pm CST](#). This webinar will detail the importance of public health messaging, social media, outreach and engagement and data; provide tips and advice for creating new or updating existing crisis communications plans; and share information on tools and resources to assist public health leaders and health communicators in combating misinformation and disinformation.

Panelists:

- Brandi Hight Bank, Vice President for Public Health and Policy, Klick
- Emily Dore, Director, Stakeholder Coalitions, Klick
- Nick O'Toole, Policy & Advocacy Manager, Klick

[Click here](#) to register.



Was IZ Newsletter Issue 100 informative?

Yes

No

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