



State of Louisiana
Louisiana Department of Health
Office of Public Health

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TO: Vaccines for Children (VFC) Providers

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SUBJECT: **COVID-19 and Routine Immunizations Update**

Vaccination rates among Louisiana’s children and adults have dropped considerably during to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Louisiana Immunization Program strongly recommends that providers continue vaccinating patients during the pandemic, especially children ages 0-24 months and high-risk children and adults. We also encourage women in their third trimester be prioritized for vaccinations. Interruptions in access to vaccinations could lead to additional disease outbreaks and low overall vaccination coverage in Louisiana.

As clinics begin to return to regular vaccination operations and begin vaccinating more patients, it is important that they implement immunization strategies used to slow the spread of COVID-19 in communities and keep patients safe. Here are some strategies to consider when offering routine vaccinations:

- Scheduling well visits in the morning and sick visits in the afternoon.
- Separating patients spatially. Placing patients with sick visits in different areas of the clinic or another location from patients with well visits.
- Collaborating with providers in the community to identify separate locations for holding well visits for children.
- Prioritize conducting well child vaccinations for children ages 0-24 months. If needed, reschedule well visits for older children later.
- Generally lower the number of patients on site at any one time. Possibly close a waiting room or registration area and have patients check in by phone from the parking lot.
- Establish different entrances in your clinic where sick and well patients may enter. Clearly mark entrances for patients considered to be at higher risk for COVID-19.
- Tell patients who are ill to use telemedicine or a phone call. Some chronic conditions may be safely managed by clinic staff remotely.
- Screen all patients and caregivers for high-risk symptoms.
- Refer high-risk adults to pharmacies who can give vaccines at less busy times to keep them safer.

We encourage vaccination providers to access the “Back to the Office Campaign Toolkit” that was developed by the Louisiana Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (LAAAP), in May. The resource provides letter templates, infographics, and other messaging tools that can help organizations get their patients to return for their routine vaccinations. The toolkit can be found on the LAAAP’s website at www.laaap.org/BTO/.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate contacting your Immunization Program Consultant or the Immunization Program at 504-568-2600.