



Texas Department of State Health Services
Vaccine Policy Update
December 19, 2011

The Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) intends to implement changes in policies governing immunization services provided through the Texas Vaccines for Children Program (TVFC) and the Adult Safety Net Program (ASN). The TVFC and ASN programs have provided public health leadership and resources resulting in significant improvements in vaccine coverage levels and decreased incidence of vaccine-preventable diseases across Texas.

Recent environmental changes have created the need for carefully-considered policy changes that respond to the changing environment, focus public health support on populations in greatest need, and ensure continued access to immunizations for children and adults. DSHS has developed these policy changes in response to reductions in federal funds for vaccine purchases, reductions in immunization strategy general revenue funds, increased federal scrutiny and accountability for publicly-funded vaccines, and increases in prices for some vaccines.

Vaccine coverage levels for children have improved in recent years and DSHS is committed to continuing this improvement. Disease incidence and coverage levels will continue to be monitored carefully and DSHS will work with stakeholders and partners across the state to sustain and continue improvement in reducing the burden of vaccine preventable diseases.

TVFC Program

Effective January 1, 2012, the following policy changes will be implemented:

- Children who have private insurance that covers vaccines will no longer be eligible for low-cost vaccines in public health department clinics, but instead will be referred to their medical home for immunization services. In some cases, local health departments may be the medical home that provides comprehensive healthcare services. In these cases, private insurance is accepted in those public health settings.
- Underinsured children will continue to receive immunizations from their medical home, Federally-Qualified Health Centers (FQHC), and Rural Health Centers (RHC). Additionally, in early 2012, DSHS will pursue delegation agreements with FQHCs and RHCs that should result in public health clinics also being able to serve underinsured children.
- DSHS will adopt the federal eligibility criteria for defining "underinsured" children. The federal criteria include children whose commercial (private) insurance does not cover one or more vaccines or whose insurance caps vaccine coverage at a certain amount (once that amount has been reached, the child is considered underinsured).

- Individuals who begin a vaccine series while age 18 or younger (and TVFC-eligible), may finish that series at public health clinics that are ASN providers, provided the series is completed prior to their 20th birthday.

ASN Program

Effective January 1, 2012, the vaccines available through the adult program (for uninsured individuals who are 19 years of age or older) will be limited based on available funding. Initially the following list of vaccines will continue to be available, but as funds are identified this list could change:

- Hepatitis B vaccine
- Measles/Mumps/Rubella vaccine
- Tetanus/Diphtheria/Pertussis vaccine
- Tetanus/Diphtheria vaccine

In addition, DSHS will provide other vaccines on a more limited basis in the clinics that are operated by DSHS in counties where there is no local health department. These vaccines include:

- Pneumococcal vaccine
- Influenza vaccine

Other vaccines and biological products will be available for adults based on recommended use in disease outbreak and emergency situations. These products include rabies vaccine, hepatitis A vaccine, varicella vaccine, and immune globulins. DSHS will work to ensure these products are available when needed to protect against diseases such as rabies, hepatitis A, measles, mumps or hepatitis B.

Also, DSHS has announced a temporary policy to make meningococcal vaccine available through January 31, 2012 to help support the new law requiring certain first-time college students to provide proof of meningococcal vaccination. DSHS is distributing this vaccine to public health clinics in limited amounts as resources allow. Since these supplies are limited, university staff and other community agencies should continue to refer students to their medical homes, leaving the public health clinics as providers of last resort.

For questions about these policy changes or for other information regarding immunizations and vaccine preventable diseases, please contact the DSHS Immunization Branch at (800) 252-9152.