

Testimony
House Bill 1165
House Human Services Committee
January 21, 2013
North Dakota Department of Health

Good morning, Chairman Weisz and members of the House Human Services Committee. My name is Molly Howell, and I am the Immunization Program manager for the North Dakota Department of Health. I am here today to provide testimony in support of House Bill 1165.

North Dakota Immunization Information System

The North Dakota Immunization Information System (NDIIS) was established in 1988. The original system required users to dial in via a modem to connect and search for patients' vaccination records. The North Dakota Immunization Program contracted with Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Dakota (BCBSND) in 1996 to develop upgrades from the original system. In November 2001, the existing registry was converted into a web-based application. BCBSND continues to perform maintenance and upgrades on the NDIIS today.

The NDIIS is a confidential, population-based, computerized information system that attempts to collect vaccination data about all North Dakotans. The NDIIS is an important tool to increase and sustain high vaccination coverage by consolidating vaccination records of North Dakotans from multiple providers, generating reminder and recall vaccination notices, and providing official vaccination forms and vaccination coverage assessments.

During the 2009 Legislative Session, NDIIS entry became mandated for childhood immunizations. During the 2011 Legislative Session, a change was made to the law to require entry of childhood immunizations in the NDIIS within four weeks of administration.

Children are entered into the NDIIS at birth through a linkage with electronic birth records. An NDIIS vaccination record also can be initiated by a health-care provider at the time of an immunization. Currently, the NDIIS is electronically connected to Altru Health System's electronic medical records, which means when Altru staff enter vaccinations into their electronic medical record, that dose is automatically sent to the NDIIS. The NDIIS is in the testing phase for interoperability with two additional health systems and plans to directly connect to a total of seven health systems across the state. The NDIIS

will also be connected to the North Dakota Health Information Network, which will allow additional providers to electronically submit data to the NDIIS.

NDIIS Immunization Data

The NDIIS is one of the most highly populated immunization registries in the United States. In fact, North Dakota is one of only seven sentinel sites in the United States that receive additional grant funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for higher standards of data quality in the NDIIS and to routinely analyze data for programmatic decision-making.

The vast majority of childhood immunizations are entered into the NDIIS. Ninety-four percent of children ages 4 months through 6 years of age have two or more immunizations in the NDIIS. Ninety-seven percent of adolescents, ages 13 to 17, have at least two doses of vaccine in the NDIIS. The two Air Force Bases in North Dakota do not enter into the NDIIS.

Many adult immunizations are also entered into the NDIIS. It is estimated that 69 percent of North Dakota adults ages 19 and older have at least one dose of vaccine in the NDIIS. Seventy-six percent of North Dakota adults ages 50 and older have at least one dose of vaccine in the NDIIS. These estimates are based on the number of doses in the NDIIS and the state's population. Various providers from around the state entered 200,318 doses into the NDIIS for adults in 2012 (36,901 of those were entered by local public health units).

More than 1,000 (1,010) sites and 29,188 users are actively using the NDIIS to enter and look up immunizations. These providers range from private clinics and local public health units to pharmacies, schools, and long-term care facilities.

Benefits of the NDIIS

Health-care providers and patients benefit from the use of the NDIIS for adults. The following are a few examples of benefits:

- The NDIIS consolidates immunization records from providers across the state, so providers, patients and parents of children will always be able to access their immunization records. The NDIIS reduces the possibility of patients receiving extra immunizations, due to the need to be revaccinated if a record cannot be found.
- The NDIIS is capable of conducting reminder/recall notifications to remind people when immunizations are due. Studies show that reminder/recall systems are effective at increasing immunization rates.

One study found that reminder/recall significantly increased influenza immunization in children with high-risk conditions, with a vaccination rate of 42 percent in those recalled, compared with 25 percent in those not recalled.

- Forecasting of the immunization schedule is currently available on the NDIIS. The forecaster tells providers whether or not a patient is up-to-date on immunizations and when future immunizations are due. The forecaster helps to prevent providers from giving immunizations at inappropriate times, and it also assists providers in avoiding missed opportunities for vaccination.
- Health-care providers are able to access their clinic immunization rates and identify areas of improvement in immunization rates using the NDIIS.
- Health-care providers are able to print immunization records for parents to take to their children's schools and child care facilities and for adults to use when applying for college or jobs.
- The NDIIS is useful during emergencies. During the H1N1 influenza outbreak of 2009, the NDIIS was able to track vaccinations and provide important information about which high-risk groups were being vaccinated and where vaccine was needed. During flooding in 2011, the Department of Health was able to stand up a hotline and look up tetanus immunization records in the NDIIS for the public. Unfortunately, some adult vaccinations were not in the NDIIS at that time.

Conclusion

The NDIIS is one of the most populated immunization registries and has one of the highest provider participation rates in the nation. Requiring the use of the NDIIS for adult vaccinations will ensure patients do not receive extra doses of vaccine, thereby protecting patient safety. NDIIS adult immunization entry also improves continuity of care by having one central database for immunizations for North Dakota residents of all ages and consolidating records from multiple providers.

This concludes my testimony. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.