



August 30, 2013

Re: **HPV Vaccination Call To Action**

Dear Immunization Provider,

Human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine prevents cancer, but less than half of the adolescents in North Dakota have been provided this protection. This letter serves as a call to action for all providers to be sure to offer HPV vaccine to every eligible patient.

HPV vaccine is routinely recommended for all adolescents (females and males) at 11 to 12 years of age. Catch-up vaccination is routinely recommended for all adolescents ages 13 to 21. Females are recommended for catch-up vaccination through age 26. High-risk males ages 22 to 26 are also recommended to be vaccinated. The vaccine is most effective when administered prior to the start of sexual activity. Recent research shows that getting the HPV vaccine does not make kids more likely to be sexually active or start having sex at a younger age. Also, the immune system responds better to the vaccine at the 11 to 12 age range.

The Vaccines For Children (VFC) Program provides HPV vaccine for adolescents who are Medicaid-eligible, American Indian, uninsured, and underinsured. In addition, federal HPV vaccine is also available for uninsured and underinsured adults.

Recommendations to increase HPV vaccination rates:

- HPV vaccine should be recommended at every visit, including high school activity physicals, minor sick visits, etc. When offering HPV vaccine, be sure to offer it as you would Tdap or meningococcal vaccine. HPV vaccine should not be viewed as less important just because it is not required for school. It should not be offered as an "optional" vaccine, but as a routinely recommended vaccine like the others. Research shows that HPV vaccine acceptance, like most vaccines, is influenced mostly by provider recommendation. Immunization rates for Tdap and meningococcal vaccination are high in North Dakota (89.0% and 87.9% respectively), which shows that adolescents are presenting for vaccinations, but not receiving all vaccines that they are eligible for.
- The North Dakota Department of Health (NDDoH) is conducting monthly recall of all adolescents ages 13 to 17 for Tdap, meningococcal, varicella, and HPV vaccines (only if started the series). As parents present their children for these vaccines, be sure to strongly recommend HPV vaccine. The North Dakota Immunization Information System (NDIIS) has a vaccine forecaster which can be used to determine which vaccines the adolescent is due for. I recommend using the forecaster every time an adolescent visits your clinic.
- The NDDoH e-mails clinic-level adolescent immunization rates based on NDIIS data to immunization providers throughout the state on a quarterly basis. I recommend your clinic use these rates as a baseline to determine whether or not HPV vaccination efforts are working at your facility or if changes need to be made.
- Research has also shown that some physicians are not comfortable discussing HPV vaccine. Attached is a fact sheet from the CDC that will assist you in discussing the most common questions parents may have about HPV vaccine.

Thank you for your time and attention in regard to this important topic. Together we can protect North Dakota children from developing cancer in the future. Please contact the North Dakota Department of Health Immunization Program at 800.472.2180 for assistance or questions about HPV vaccine.

Sincerely,

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