



Colorado Department  
of Public Health  
and Environment

# Frequently Asked Questions about the Vaccines for Children (VFC) Program

The following are questions frequently asked about the VFC Program. Please contact the VFC Program at 303-692-2700 if you have questions or need additional information.

## Provider Enrollment

### *Which providers are allowed to enroll in the VFC program in Colorado?*

- ✚ Providers who see children ages 0 through 18 years of age who fall into one of the categories below should consider becoming a VFC provider:
  - ❖ Children insured by Medicaid; and / or
  - ❖ Children who have NO health insurance,
  - ❖ Federally Qualified Health Centers and Rural Health Clinics who see underinsured children in addition to uninsured children and children on Medicaid.

- ✚ Providers are defined as:
  - ❖ Those individuals with prescribing privileges:
    - MD's and DO's
    - NP's
    - PA's
  - ❖ Clinics include:
    - Public Health Agencies,
    - Federally Qualified Health Centers
    - Rural Health Clinics
    - Private physician offices and clinics
    - School Based Health Centers
    - Hospitals
    - Urgent Care clinics

**NOTE:** Since pharmacists are not eligible Medicaid providers in Colorado, pharmacies are not allowed to enroll in the VFC program at this time.

### *How do providers enroll in the VFC program?*

- ✚ Providers must submit a completed **Provider Pre-Enrollment Form** to the VFC Program.
  - ❖ The form is available at [www.coloradovfc.com](http://www.coloradovfc.com) ;
  - ❖ The form must be completed as accurately as possible and submitted to the VFC program via fax at: 303-691-6118.
  - ❖ After the initial screening by VFC program staff, the provider may receive a phone call to verify information.
    - Once the information has been verified, either the provider will be sent an enrollment packet via email, or:
    - Provider will be asked to correct any problems before enrollment can be considered.

- ✚ Two forms must be completed by each VFC provider at enrollment; thereafter the forms must be completed and be submitted **annually** to the VFC program:
  - ❖ **Provider Profile form:**
    - It is used to evaluate vaccine orders and ensure that the amount of VFC-funded vaccine being provided is appropriate to the number of VFC-eligible children that receives care from that specific provider office.
    - For all VFC-enrolled providers, enrollment figures must be based on actual data. The Provider Profile must be updated annually.
  - ❖ **Provider Enrollment form:**
    - The Provider Enrollment form is the provider's agreement to comply with all the conditions of the VFC program.
    - This form must be signed annually.
    - The medical director or equivalent in a group practice must sign the Provider Enrollment form for the entire group.
    - ***Submission of signed Provider Enrollment forms and completed Provider Profile forms must occur annually.***
  
- ✚ Providers new to the VFC program will be required to complete two online training courses located on the “You Call the Shots” website. The courses “Vaccines for Children (VFC)” and “Vaccine Storage and Handling” can be found at: <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/ed/youcalltheshots.htm>
  - ❖ Certificates of completion for both courses must be available for review at the enrollment site visit.
  - ❖ The designated Vaccine Coordinator and at least one designated back-up for the coordinator are required to complete the training.
  
- ✚ Providers wishing to enroll in the program also successfully complete an enrollment Site Visit done by VFC staff. This visit is scheduled after all required paperwork has been received by the VFC program.

## **VFC Eligibility**

### ***Who is eligible to receive VFC vaccines?***

- ✚ Children, from birth through 18 years of age, who meet at least one of the following criteria:
  - ❖ Medicaid eligible;
  - ❖ Uninsured;
  - ❖ American Indian/Alaskan Native, or;
  - ❖ ***Underinsured – These patients can ONLY receive VFC vaccines at federally qualified health centers (FQHCs) or rural health clinics (RHCs).***

### ***Who is NOT-eligible to receive VFC vaccine?***

**Children from birth through age 18 years of age, who meet at least one of the following criteria:**

- ❖ Underinsured children seen in a private physician’s office (these children should be referred to either a public health clinic or a federally qualified health center to receive vaccinations);
- ❖ Children covered by the **Colorado Child Health Plan Plus (CHP+)**;

- ❖ Children who have health insurance but whose insurance covers only a percent of the cost of one or more vaccines are still considered insured and therefore not eligible for VFC vaccines

### ***What is the definition of Underinsured as it applies to the VFC Program?***

Underinsured means your patient has health insurance, but:

- ❖ The coverage doesn't include vaccines;
- ❖ The coverage only covers selected vaccines.

For example, if insurance covers 100% of the cost of MMR but only 50% of the cost of HPV, the child is actually considered FULLY INSURED for both MMR and HPV. If the insurance covers MMR at 100% but does **not** cover HPV, the child is considered underinsured for HPV. Co-payments and unmet deductibles (i.e., parent must pay \$500 in medical expenses before insurance kicks in) do NOT meet the definition of underinsured.

### ***How do I know if my clinic is a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) or a Rural Health Clinic (RHC)?***

- ✚ For **FQHC** verification contact: **Tanah Wagenseller** of the Colorado Community Health Network (CCHN) at 303-861-5165, ext. 241; or you can visit: <http://www.cchn.org>
- ✚ For **RHC** verification contact: Judy Hughs of the Health Facilities Division of the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment at 303-692-2908.

### ***Our clinic is located in a rural part of the state. Doesn't that automatically mean we have been designated as a RHC?***

- ✚ Not necessarily. A clinic must meet several eligibility qualifications before being designated as a RHC. For more information contact Judy Hughs at 303-692-2908.

### ***If an American Indian/Alaskan Native child has insurance that covers vaccines (full or partial), is the child still eligible to receive VFC vaccine?***

- ✚ **Yes.** American Indian/Alaskan Native children are eligible to receive VFC vaccines regardless of insurance status. AI/AN children are always VFC-eligible. VFC is an entitlement program and participation is not mandatory for an eligible child. **For AI/AN children that have full immunization benefits through a primary private insurance, the decision to participate in the VFC program should be made based on what is financially most cost effective to the family.**

### ***Do I have to screen for VFC eligibility every time a child comes in to the office?***

- ✚ **Yes.** VFC eligibility needs to be determined and documented at each immunization encounter.

### ***I thought underinsured children could also receive VFC vaccines? Is that correct?***

- ✚ **Yes.** Refer to the question on VFC eligibility, above. Underinsured children can receive VFC vaccines **only** at Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) or at Rural Health Clinics (RHCs).

### ***Are children who have Medicaid as a secondary insurance eligible to receive VFC vaccine?***

- ✚ **Yes.** All children who have Medicaid as a secondary insurance are eligible for VFC vaccines as long as they remain on Medicaid. The Colorado Medicaid Program will pay the claim for the administration fee and seek reimbursement from the primary insurance carrier.

#### ***Are children enrolled in the Colorado Child Health Plan Plus (CHP+) eligible to receive VFC vaccines?***

- ✚ **No.** Children enrolled in the Colorado CHP+ program are considered fully insured and are **NOT** eligible to receive VFC vaccines. In Colorado, the Title XXI Children's Health Insurance Program (CHP+) is a separate program and not a Medicaid expansion program.

#### ***Are children covered by the Colorado Indigent Care Program (CICP) eligible to receive VFC vaccines?***

- ✚ **Yes.** The VFC Program considers these children to be uninsured.

#### ***Are children enrolled in a Medicaid managed care plan (such as Colorado Access, Rocky Mountain Health Plan, Denver Health, etc) eligible to receive VFC vaccines?***

- ✚ **Yes.** However, they *must* be in the plan because they are enrolled in Medicaid and **NOT CHP+**.

#### ***Can juveniles who are incarcerated and lose access to their health insurance be considered uninsured and receive VFC vaccines?***

- ✚ **Yes,** an individual (under age 19) who loses access to benefits under his/her health insurance while incarcerated is considered uninsured for purposes of the VFC program.

#### ***If a VFC-eligible child who is uninsured, American Indian/Alaskan Native, or underinsured (FQHCs and RHCs only) starts a vaccine series (such as hepatitis B or HPV vaccine) at age 18, can VFC vaccine be used to complete the series after the child turns 19?***

- ✚ **No.** Children are eligible to receive VFC vaccines only through age 18 regardless of the individual's immunization status (series completed or series not-completed). They **are not** eligible once they turn age 19.

#### ***I thought we could also give CDPHE-supplied vaccines to 19 and 20 year-old individuals enrolled in Medicaid. Is that correct?***

- ✚ **No.** Starting January 2013, the CDPHE Immunization Program no longer supplies vaccines to 19 and 20 year olds enrolled in Medicaid. Immunizations are a covered benefit for Medicaid enrolled individuals beginning at age 19, and are reimbursed at a higher rate than VFC vaccines. Check the current Medicaid bulletin for more information.

## **Administration Fees**

#### ***Are we allowed to charge for the VFC vaccines?***

- ✚ **No.** You cannot charge your patients for the cost of the VFC vaccines, since you received them from the VFC Program at no cost. To do so is considered fraud and an abuse of the VFC Program.

#### ***Can we charge for administering VFC vaccines to our patients?***

- ✚ **Yes.** You are allowed to charge an Administration fee for administering VFC vaccines to eligible patients. The current maximum regional fee that can be collected from VFC eligible patients is \$21.68 per dose of vaccine administered.
- ✚ Providers administering VFC vaccines to Medicaid enrolled children agree to accept the current reimbursement rate set by CMS.
- ✚ **Providers *CANNOT REFUSE* to administer a VFC vaccine to a VFC-eligible child in their practice simply because the parent cannot pay the administration fee.**

***Why is the VFC vaccine administration fee capped at \$21.68 for the non-Medicaid enrolled, VFC eligible children (those that are uninsured or under-insured, and / or non-Medicaid American Indian/Alaskan Native)?***

- ✚ In 1995 the Maximum Regional charges for Vaccine Administration were established by the Department of Health and Human Services' Health Care Policy and Finance based on the geographic area of the country. They took the average national cost to administer a vaccine and multiplied it by the total Geographic Practice Cost Indices (GPCI) for each state to come up with the maximum regional charge. The GPCI included physician work, practice expenses, and malpractice. These charges will be increased to \$21.68 from the current \$14.74, beginning January 1, 2013, and will be in effect until the end of 2014.

***We have been using VFC vaccines on fully insured patients in our office and then billing the insurance company for the cost of the vaccine and an administration fee. Is this OK?***

- ✚ **No.** The federal VFC Program considers this action to be abuse of the VFC program. This act is punishable by law.

## **Vaccine Accountability**

***How do I order vaccine through the VFC Program?***

- ✚ To order vaccine, providers will be using the Vaccine Ordering Module (VOM).

**NOTE: Only newly enrolled providers are allowed to place their initial vaccine orders by fax. All other enrolled providers use the online ordering tool.**

***Is there any training that I need to take before I am able to place my orders through the Vaccine Ordering Module (VOM)?***

- ✚ **Yes.** Prior to using the online ordering system known as the VOM, the individuals responsible for placing vaccine orders must successfully complete training on Inventory Reconciliation and Vaccine Ordering. These training courses are available at: <http://co.train.org>
  - ❖ For more information contact: the VFC Program at 303-692-2700 or [cdphe\\_vfc@state.co.us](mailto:cdphe_vfc@state.co.us) for instructions.

*Do I have to report the number of doses of vaccine that I use every month, or only when I place an order?*

- ✚ All doses of vaccine administered, wasted, spoiled, or expired must be reported when inventory reconciliation is completed. This reconciliation must be closed no more than 14 days prior to placing an order. How often you place an order is your decision, but orders cannot be placed more than once every calendar month.

*Do I have to list my entire VFC vaccine inventory in my refrigerator and freezer when placing an order?*

- ✚ **Yes.** The VFC Program and the Vaccine Ordering Module (VOM) requires the entire VFC vaccine inventory to be reported on your vaccine order.
  - ❖ The VOM will not allow an order to be processed without current inventory being properly reconciled.

*Our office is new to the VFC program and I'm faxing in my first order. When can I expect my vaccine?*

- ✚ After your order is faxed to the VFC program, you will receive an email confirmation within 48 hours acknowledging receipt of your order.
- ✚ **Contact the VFC Program at 303-692-2700 immediately, if you do not receive a return email confirmation within 48 hours.**
- ✚ Your order will then be processed, and you should expect to receive your shipment within **three (3) weeks**.

*How often can I order VFC vaccine?*

- ✚ VFC vaccine orders can be placed **ONCE a month**.
- ✚ Vaccine orders are processed up to 5:00 pm on the 21<sup>st</sup> day of every month.
- ✚ No vaccine orders will be accepted or processed from the 21<sup>st</sup> after 5:00 pm through the last day of the month.
  - ❖ **Routine orders submitted more frequently than monthly will not be accepted.**
  - ❖ If vaccines are forgotten on the initial month's order, they will need to be submitted with next month's order.
  - ❖ Be sure to place orders with sufficient vaccine stock on hand to allow up to **three (3) weeks for delivery** but maintaining no more than a **30-45 day inventory**.
- ✚ It is recommended that providers keep copies of their VFC vaccine order requests.
- ✚ All vaccine orders will receive an electronic order confirmation within 48 hours of receipt.

*We have a bunch of VFC vaccine that has expired. In addition, we have some VFC vaccine that the vaccine manufacturer says was ruined because it was left out of the refrigerator for several weeks. Is it OK to throw away this vaccine?*

- ✚ **No.** Please follow the VFC Vaccine Return instructions for expired vaccines on the Vaccine Return form.
- ✚ A current Vaccine Return form can be accessed from our website at [www.coloradovfc.com](http://www.coloradovfc.com).
  - ❖ Please contact the VFC program at 303-692-2700 or [jason.hien@state.co.us](mailto:jason.hien@state.co.us) for instructions for returning wasted non-expired vaccine.
  - ❖ All VFC vaccines that have expired or been ruined, wasted, etc., must be returned within 6 months of the expiration date to be eligible for the federal excise tax reimbursement.

## *What is the Vaccine Return procedure for the VFC Program?*

### **✚ For vaccines that are still viable (have not been exposed to out of range temperatures):**

- ❖ If you have usable viable vaccine that is going to expire, contact the VFC Program at 303-692-2700 or [cdphe\\_vfc@state.co.us](mailto:cdphe_vfc@state.co.us) for instructions.
- ❖ Please notify the VFC Program at least **60-90 days** prior to the expiration date of any VFC vaccines.
- ❖ Vaccines that are still viable cannot be accepted for return until after the expiration date.

### **✚ For vaccines that have been wasted or are past their expiration date:**

- ❖ **Remove expired or wasted vaccines from inventory immediately!**
- ❖ Please follow the VFC Vaccine Return instructions for expired vaccines on the Vaccine Return form.
- ❖ A current Vaccine Return form can be accessed from our website at [www.coloradovfc.com](http://www.coloradovfc.com).

## *I received my VFC vaccine order and it's all messed up! I received vaccines that I did not order and am missing vaccines that I did order. Should I call McKesson Specialty directly?*

- ❖ **No.** Immediately contact the VFC Program at 303-692-2700 for assistance with vaccine order problems.
- ❖ **Please report to the VFC Program within 2 hours of receiving the package.**
- ❖ McKesson will replace any incorrect vaccine orders within the 2 hour window.

## *I ordered our VFC vaccine(s) two weeks ago and still have not received them. We have a big clinic tomorrow and I am just about out of vaccine. Why the delay?*

- ✚ Please allow **three (3) weeks from the date of your order for delivery** of your VFC vaccines.
- ✚ Remember to keep a 30-45 day supply of VFC vaccines on hand and plan your clinics so that you don't run out of vaccine before your order arrives.
- ✚ **Direct ship orders** (Varicella vaccine orders that are shipped directly from Merck) will take the entire three weeks from the date of the order until it is received in the provider office.

## *We have several boxes/coolers that we received vaccine in and they are starting to clutter our office. Is it OK to return these boxes to you?*

- ✚ **No.** Recycle all vaccine boxes received from McKesson. **Do NOT return boxes to McKesson.**

## *We came back from a meeting to find our vaccine shipment sitting outside of the front door of the office, and when we opened the box, the temperature indicator was out of range. What should we do?*

- ✚ You must contact McKesson at **1-877-822-7746 within 2 business hours** of receipt of the package (s) if the temperature indicator(s) is out of range.
  - ❖ Additionally, contact the VFC Program at 303-692-2700 or [cdphe\\_vfc@state.co.us](mailto:cdphe_vfc@state.co.us) to notify the VFC Program of out of range temperature indicators.
  - ❖ McKesson Specialty Distribution has been alerted to some instances in which providers have found vaccine packages left out on their doorstep.
  - ❖ When providers have a FedEx signature release on file, it allows FedEx to drop off any FedEx package without a signature.

- ❖ CDC and McKesson cannot override the signature release on file for McKesson shipments. You may want to consider canceling your signature release on file; however, such a cancellation will apply to all packages (vaccine and otherwise).

### ***In the past, we always sent our expired vaccine back to CDPHE, is that OK?***

- ✚ **No.** All expired or wasted vaccines must be sent back to McKesson Specialty Distribution.
- ✚ Please follow the VFC Vaccine Return instructions for expired vaccines on the Vaccine Return form.
- ✚ A current Vaccine Return form can be accessed from our website at [www.coloradovfc.com](http://www.coloradovfc.com) .
  - ❖ For clarification, only wasted or expired/damaged vaccines that are in the original containers should be returned to McKesson.
  - ❖ Please **DO NOT** return vaccines that have already been drawn up into syringes, as this poses a threat to workers at the distribution center.
  - ❖ All VFC vaccines that have expired or been ruined, wasted, expired, etc., must be returned to McKesson **within 6 months** of the expiration date.

### ***Are we allowed to borrow between our VFC stock and our private stock of vaccines?***

- ✚ Providers that care for VFC-eligible and privately insured children *must maintain two separate stocks of vaccines*, one for privately insured children and another for VFC-and/or state vaccine-eligible children. Borrowing between public and private stocks of vaccines is allowed, but must be a rare occurrence. CDC's expectation is that VFC-enrolled providers maintain adequate stocks of vaccine to administer to both privately insured and VFC-eligible children.
  - ❖ When a situation occurs which necessitates the borrowing of vaccine from VFC stock to administer to a non-VFC-eligible child or from private stock to administer to a VFC-eligible child, the VFC borrowing report must be completed.
  - ❖ **The borrowing of vaccine must be due to unforeseen delay or circumstance surrounding the vaccine that was ordered.**
  - ❖ Similar to temperature log forms, the borrowing form must be maintained by the provider site and must be available for review during VFC site visits.
  - ❖ The VFC borrowing report is available at: [www.coloradovfc.com](http://www.coloradovfc.com) .

### ***What is the best way to protect my investments of VFC vaccine and my private stock vaccine in my storage units?***

- ✚ The best way to protect the investments you have made in vaccine storage equipment and vaccines is to guarantee your business insurance covers the cost to replace your equipment **AND YOUR INVENTORY** in the event that the unit fails. A quick call to your agent now can prevent major out of pocket expenses later!
- ✚ The second best way to protect your vaccine investments is to purchase the proper vaccine storage equipment.

### ***What are the current guidelines for vaccine storage and equipment?***

- ✚ Providers wishing to enroll in the VFC program must meet the storage requirement prior to being enrolled in the program.

### Refrigerators:

- ✚ The federal VFC program requires that all vaccines purchased with public funds (such as VFC vaccine) be stored properly.
  - ❖ **The use of dormitory or bar-style refrigerator/freezers for storage of VFC vaccine is not allowed at any time.**
  
- ✚ The minimum acceptable storage for providers in Colorado is a standard size household combination refrigerator/freezer with separate external doors and separate thermostat controls for the refrigerator and freezer. This requirement may change in the future.
  - ❖ The characteristics of an appropriate storage unit include:
    - Enough room to store the year's largest inventory without crowding;
    - Provide sufficient room to store water bottles in the refrigerator and frozen coolant packs in the freezer to stabilize the temperature;
    - Have a working, calibrated thermometer with Certificate of Traceability and Calibration (also known as Report of Calibration) placed in a central area inside each storage compartment (requirement); and
    - In addition, frost-free or automatic defrost cycle units are preferred.
  
- ✚ The CDC recommends the following for vaccine storage:
  - ❖ Use of stand-alone refrigerator and freezer units, meaning a self-contained unit that only refrigerates or freezes and is suitable for vaccine storage. These units can vary in size, from a compact, under-the-counter style to a large, stand-alone, pharmaceutical grade storage unit.
    - Use of stand-alone units is a best practice.
  - ❖ Because freezing of refrigerated vaccines affects vaccine potency more than other exposure problems, it is especially important that refrigerators be selected and set up in a way that eliminates the chance of freezing vaccine.
  - ❖ An alternative to stand-alone units is to use only the refrigerator compartment of a combination household refrigerator/freezer unit to store refrigerated vaccines.
    - In this case, the combination household refrigerator/freezer should have separate exterior doors and thermostat controls.
    - A separate stand-alone freezer should then be used to store frozen vaccines, since studies conducted by the National Institute for Standards and Technology have demonstrated that the freezer section of combination units is not capable of reliably maintaining appropriate frozen vaccine storage temperatures.

### Thermometers:

- ✚ Providers enrolled in the VFC Program are required to have calibrated thermometers in all refrigerators and freezers used for VFC vaccine storage in order to monitor temperatures.
  - ❖ Each device is to be covered by a Certificate of Traceability and Calibration Testing (also known as Report of Calibration).
  - ❖ Thermometer calibration must be tested annually or according to manufacturer recommendations by a laboratory with accreditation from an ILAC MRA signatory body. Laboratories that have attained this accreditation meet the requirements for traceability.
  - ❖ Providers are responsible for maintaining Certificates of Traceability and Calibration Testing (also known as Report of Calibration).

### Temperature Monitoring:

#### *How often must I check and document temperatures?*

- ✚ The VFC program requires that temperatures must be read and documentation twice a day every day that the clinic is open. These logs must be kept in a safe location and available for review by VFC staff, if necessary.
  - ❖ Logs approved for use by the VFC program are available to either print or order from the VFC program at [www.coloradovfc.com](http://www.coloradovfc.com) )
  - ❖ In addition to the temperatures being documented twice daily, the time of the temperature check and the initials or signature of the individual doing the documentation must also be on the log. This will become a requirement in 2015.
- ✚ All temperature logs and documentation of actions taken for out of range temperatures must be kept for a minimum of 3 years and be available for review upon request, or during a VFC Compliance Site Visit.

***Must I have an alarm system on my vaccine storage unit prior to being enrolled in the VFC program?***

- ✚ The CDC *does not* require VFC enrolled providers to have alarm systems on their vaccine storage units, at this time. This is individual provider preference.
  - ❖ Storage units secured with locks are also optional at this time.

## **General VFC Information**

***Where can I get VFC Program forms?***

- ✚ Visit the VFC Program website at [www.coloradovfc.com](http://www.coloradovfc.com) for all current VFC forms.

***Where can I get updates about the VFC Program?***

- ✚ Visit the VFC Program website at [www.coloradovfc.com](http://www.coloradovfc.com) for current VFC memos and clinical updates.
- ✚ All VFC communications comes to providers via email on a regular basis.

***Our practice recently moved and/or we have a new VFC contact person. Who should I notify about these changes?***

- ✚ You should notify the VFC Program by submitting a “**Change of Provider Information form**”.
- ✚ The form can be accessed from our web page at [www.coloradovfc.com](http://www.coloradovfc.com)
  - ❖ Complete the form and fax it to 303-691-6118.
  - ❖ ***A site visit may be required once your move is complete.***
  - ❖ If we do not have the most current contact information from your provider site, we cannot ensure that you will receive up to date VFC information.

***I heard that the VFC program is now requiring yearly training. What training is required, and who is required to take the training?***

- ✚ Providers enrolled in the VFC program are required to complete two online training courses located on the “You Call the Shots” website. The courses “Vaccines for Children (VFC)” and “Vaccine Storage and Handling” can be found at: <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/ed/youcalltheshots.htm>

- ❖ Certificates of completion for both courses must be submitted to the VFC program yearly with the annual enrollment process.
- ❖ The designated Vaccine Coordinator and at least one designated back-up for the coordinator are required to complete the training.

***Are all enrolled providers required to have a VFC Compliance site visit?***

-  **Yes.** All providers enrolled in the VFC program are required to have a VFC Compliance Site Visit as stated in the enrollment agreement. These visits take place every other year and are a way for providers and VFC program to work together to make the program stronger.