

# VFC Deputization for Underinsured Children

## **Background**

In the past, the Centers for Disease Control and prevention (CDC) and Nevada Health Centers allowed the Nevada State Immunization Program to deputize all Vaccines for Children (VFC) providers to vaccinate underinsured children with VFC vaccine. The deputization of all Nevada VFC providers expired on December 31, 2012.

In 2012, the CDC, in coordination with Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) and Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), has authorized extension of this VFC authority but only to a limited number of non-public providers where underinsured VFC-eligible children have limited or no access to a Federal Qualified Health Center (FQHC) or rural health center (RHC).

The Nevada State Immunization Program will facilitate deputization, through an MOU with Nevada Health Centers, rural health clinics, all local health departments (LHDs), and Community Health Nurses (CHNs) to vaccinate underinsured VFC-eligible children. In addition, in locations without LHDs or where LHDs lack capacity to serve the underinsured, a limited number of non-public VFC providers have been designated by the Nevada State Immunization Program and approved by CDC to serve in place of LHDs to vaccinate underinsured children with VFC vaccine.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **When does the new MOU expire?**

The new MOU will expire December 31, 2013. At that time, the MOU will have to be renewed and the Nevada State Immunization Program will review deputized providers and make changes if necessary.

### **Who is an underinsured child?**

Underinsured refers to a child who has commercial (private) health insurance, but the coverage does not include vaccines; a child whose insurance covers only selected vaccines (VFC-eligible for non-covered vaccines only); or a child whose insurance caps vaccine coverage at a certain amount. Once that coverage amount is reached, the child is categorized as underinsured.

### **Are Indian Health Services (IHS) and tribal health departments considered LHDs?**

No. IHS and tribal health departments are not deputized to provide VFC vaccines to underinsured children. American Indian/Alaskan Native children are eligible to receive VFC vaccines regardless of insurance status.

### **In the MOU template on page 2, Item #2.a: deputized VFC providers are to agree to vaccinate “walk-in” VFC-eligible underinsured children. Please define “walk-in”.**

“Walk-in” refers to any underinsured child who presents requesting a vaccine; not just established patients. However, this does not mean that the patient must be accommodated without first scheduling an appointment. To meet this requirement, your site must agree to provide immunizations to underinsured children who are not established patients in the same manner and time frame that you provide those services to established patients. Please note that “walk-in” patients do not have to receive other medical services and can just request immunization services.

## **How many providers are deputized in Nevada?**

The Nevada State Immunization Program deputized 23 private VFC providers and 8 school based clinics in addition to the 20 local health departments and community health nurses. There are also 23 FQHCs and RHCs in Nevada who can vaccinate underinsured patients with VFC vaccine.

The guidance provided by CDC stated that: “VFC awardees may request deputization of no more than the number of non-public VFC provider sites needed to serve in the place of a local health department as a safety net for immunization.”

## **How were providers chosen for deputization?**

The criteria set by the CDC for selecting providers was very limiting. The Nevada State Immunization Program first had to show that each county or city where deputization was being proposed met one or more of the following criteria set by the CDC:

- Geographic distance from an FQHC/RHC.
- Insufficient capacity of FQHCs/RHCs to serve the needs of the underinsured population.
- No LHDs or insufficient capacity of LHDs to be deputized to serve the needs of the underinsured population in their service areas.

To meet the criteria set by the CDC, Nevada State Immunization Program used population data, doses administered data, and county and city level mapping to select providers for deputization. In addition, providers were required to be enrolled in the VFC program and in compliance with VFC requirements at the time of selection.

## **What if my underinsured patients have difficulty obtaining immunizations from a deputized provider?**

Deputized providers have signed an MOU requiring them to offer immunizations to underinsured children referred from non-deputized providers. If your patients have difficulty obtaining immunizations from deputized providers, FQHCs, or RHCs please notify the Nevada State Immunization Program.

## **Where can I get more information on deputization?**

The CDC *Guidance for use of Vaccines for Children (VFC) Deputization to Extend Access to Underinsured Children with VFC Vaccine* can be found at:

[www.cdc.gov/vaccines/programs/vfc/awardees/op-guide.html](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/programs/vfc/awardees/op-guide.html)

For additional questions or concerns, please contact Teneale Chapton at [tchapton@health.nv.gov](mailto:tchapton@health.nv.gov) or (775) 684-5913.