



IAMHP

ILLINOIS ASSOCIATION OF
MEDICAID HEALTH PLANS


Recharging Routine Immunizations

Toolkit for Providers



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You are a bulwark against vaccine- preventable disease.



Dear Child Healthcare Provider,

Childhood immunization rates in the United States have declined in recent years, fueled by growing parental confusion and uncertainty around vaccine recommendations.

Pediatricians and primary care providers (PCPs) remain the most trusted voices on immunization. National surveys consistently show that parents place greater trust in their child's pediatrician than in any other source for vaccine guidance.

With nearly half of Illinois children covered by Medicaid, providers serving this population play a vital role in protecting children and communities from vaccine-preventable disease. **IAMHP and our member health plans created this toolkit to equip providers with clear, reliable resources** to navigate current immunization guidance and support confident, evidence-based conversations with families.

Stay Safe. Stay Well.

- The IAMHP Team

Supporting Illinois Parents



Identifying Hesitancy and Confidence

Parents' attitudes and intentions about vaccination fall along a continuum—from complete refusal to complete acceptance of all recommended vaccines.

Vaccine hesitancy:

- Refers to a delay in acceptance or refusal of vaccination
- Varies across time, place, and vaccines
- Influenced by factors such as complacency, convenience, and confidence
- Encompasses parental attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors

Vaccine confidence:

- Refers to the trust that parents or healthcare providers have in:
 - Recommended vaccinations
 - Providers who administer vaccines
 - Regulatory processes that lead to vaccine licensure and the recommended vaccination schedule

Lack of parental confidence in vaccines has contributed to declining childhood vaccination coverage. **Over the past decade, non-medical vaccine exemptions have increased by over 125% for Illinois kindergarteners.¹**

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). *Vaccination Coverage and Exemptions Among Kindergartners, 2024–2025 School Year (SchoolVaxView)*. July 31, 2025. <https://www.cdc.gov/schoolvaxview/data/index.html>

Empowering Parents

Pediatricians and other healthcare providers play a key role in empowering parents to make vaccination decisions by educating families and sharing trusted information.

Recommendations to keep in mind:

- IAMHP and its member health plans recommend that providers **have open, culturally sensitive conversations with parents to help them understand the benefits of vaccinations** in a way that promotes the delivery of effective pediatric care—without parents’ feeling attacked or judged for having questions.
- **Reliable information and education from the physician or advanced practice provider helps parents** fully understand the benefits and potential risks of vaccination.
 - Explain that Illinois schools and health plans follow the **American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) child and adolescent immunization schedule**.
 - The AAP schedule is developed by the country’s leading pediatric experts using rigorous scientific review.
 - Twelve of the nation’s largest medical and health organizations (including the American Medical Association, American Academy of Family Physicians, and Infectious Disease Society of America) have all formally endorsed the AAP immunization schedule. Together, these groups represent more than 1 million practitioners in the U.S.
 - Spacing out vaccines over multiple visits is generally not recommended by health experts. Research indicates no benefit to spacing out vaccines, a practice that can leave children vulnerable to infections.
 - Delaying vaccines increases the risk of contracting vaccine-preventable diseases and infecting others.
 - Remind parents that vaccines are among the most rigorously studied products in all of medicine, undergoing testing for safety and effectiveness in thousands of people before they are approved. Once a vaccine is approved, vaccine safety is actively monitored in tens of millions of people nationwide.
- **Maintaining ongoing discussions with vaccine-hesitant parents is important.** Research shows that vaccine hesitancy is dynamic, not a permanent stance. Many families move between uncertainty, delay, and acceptance over time, especially as circumstances change (e.g., child’s age, disease outbreaks, new information).

Tools You Can Use: AAP Immunization Discussion Guides

Use the AAP’s immunization discussion guides to strengthen your approach to vaccine conversations with parents.

 [Maternal and Infant](#)  [Childhood \(birth to age 6\)](#)  [Adolescents](#)

Educational Webinars for Providers

Presenters from MERCK, an IAMHP Trusted Partner, designed a webinar series about immunization strategies exclusively for members of the IAMHP community.

Strategies to Help Build Vaccine Confidence: Using Motivational Interviewing to Foster Change

Dr. Suzanne White, regional medical director of vaccine implementation science and engagement at Merck, describes the vaccine confidence spectrum, determinants of vaccine confidence, established strategies for increasing vaccine uptake, and provider communications strategies that increase vaccine acceptance.

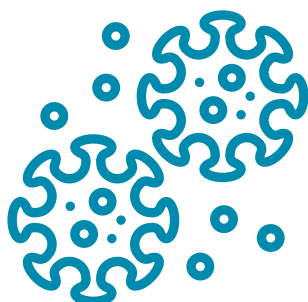


 [Click to view the recording](#)

Scientific Insights: Measles, Mumps, Rubella and Varicella and a Guide to Differential Diagnosis

As declining MMR immunization rates fuel outbreaks, many providers are seeing patients present to clinical settings with these diseases for the first time. The Merck team offers a scientific “deep dive,” with information to help clinicians detect these conditions, understand complications associated with them, and align their practice’s strategies to protect children from these illnesses through immunization.

 [Click to view the recording](#)



HPV Vaccine Completion by Age 13: A Quality Improvement Initiative in a Large Primary Care Network

While HPV vaccine uptake has shown progress, it remains below goals established by federal health agencies. Presenters describe the evolving research related to HPV-attributable cancers and detail initiatives implemented at the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia to increase HPV vaccine completion by over 25% in their adolescent patient population over a three-year period.

 [Click to view the recording](#)



Illinois Medicaid: Immunization Coverage Policy



Required Coverage for All Vaccines in the AAP Child and Adolescent Immunization Schedule

With the [AAP schedule](#) formally endorsed by the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) in 2026, all Medicaid health plans, private insurance plans, and the Vaccines for Children program must cover these vaccines.

Addressing Illinois' divergence from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) routine immunization schedule

In January 2026, the CDC revised the routine childhood immunization schedule by reducing the number of vaccines universally recommended for all children and expanding the use of shared clinical decision-making. Vaccines such as influenza, COVID-19, rotavirus, hepatitis A and B, and meningococcal were moved from universal recommendation to shared decision-making or risk-based use, while the HPV vaccine has been reduced to one dose in the new federal schedule.

“This decision was not based on any new scientific evidence,” writes Sean O’Leary, MD, MPH, FAAP, who chairs the AAP Committee on Infectious Diseases. “This breaks from the careful review process that has helped keep kids in the United States healthy for decades.”¹

In February 2026, heeding the recommendations of the Illinois Immunization Advisory Committee, the [IDPH formally endorsed the 2026 AAP child and adolescent immunization schedule](#). All immunizations recommended by IDPH must be covered by private insurance plans, Medicaid, and the Vaccines for Children (VFC) program.

Learn more about what's changed

The [AAP website](#) explains why parents and pediatric providers should adhere to its evidence-based vaccine recommendations, with helpful discussion points and answers to frequently asked questions.

1. American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP). *What Is the Difference Between the AAP-Recommended Immunization Schedule and Other Vaccine Schedules?* January 30, 2026.
<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/tips-tools/ask-the-pediatrician/Pages/what-is-the-difference-between-the-AAP-recommended-immunization-schedule-and-other-vaccine-schedules.aspx>

Outreach Tools



Ideas and Resources to Strengthen Provider Immunization Strategies

Review and enhance your practices to increase vaccine uptake and promote public health.

Essential resource: I-CARE

(Illinois Comprehensive Automated Immunization Registry Exchange)

The I-CARE registry allows public and private health care providers to share the immunization records of Illinois residents with other physicians statewide.

[Visit the IDPH website](#) to access the registry, find details about new provider enrollment, and learn about sharing your practice's data with I-CARE.

- **Target outreach:** Use your EHR, patient portal, email, phone calls, reminder/recall letters, and/or texts. Identify patients due for well-child visits by running an I-CARE “Immunization Due” report.
- **Get staff buy-in:** Run your clinic's coverage rates in I-CARE and establish daily team huddles to review patients coming into the clinic who are due or overdue for vaccines. Eliminating “missed opportunities” during visits is one of the most effective practice-level strategies to increase immunization rates.
- **Create standing orders:** Through standing orders, physicians can authorize trained clinical staff, such as nurses and medical assistants, to assess patients' immunization status and administer vaccines. Provide staff training on your protocols, and ensure your procedures emphasize the physician's role in communicating a strong recommendation to parents.
- **Share safety net options:** Educate patients who may have lost commercial insurance about Medicaid and the Vaccines for Children (VFC) program. If your organization isn't a VFC provider, use IDPH's [Vaccine Locator Dashboard](#) to recommend sites that offer publicly funded vaccines.
- **Use your channels to promote routine immunizations:** As a trusted provider to patients, your vaccination messaging resonates with families through marketing and communications activities (e.g., social media, website, paid advertising, etc.)

Bolster Your Back-to-School Campaign

Align public health urgency and system readiness to capitalize on the moment when vaccine decisions are most likely to occur.

Illinois school vaccination requirements mandate that students have required vaccines, or an approved exemption, on file by **October 15** each year. Back-to-school campaigns—typically running from July to September—are an essential opportunity for catch-up vaccinations as parents and children prepare for a new school year.

- **Kick off your campaign earlier than you think:** The school year has steadily crept earlier over the past 40 years, and most kids' first day is now in mid-August. Your campaign should gear up in July or even earlier.
- **Convenience and capacity:** Recognizing the seasonal surge in demand, providers should consider extended office hours, weekend openings, and walk-in services.
- **Marketing and communications:** Develop targeted outreach strategies for your patients, using personalized reminders (including emails, texts, phone calls, patient portal messages) that create urgency. Lend your organization's voice to public awareness campaigns surrounding back-to-school immunizations.
- **Workflows and staffing:** Consider process improvements to handle increased demand during the back-to-school season.
- **Community partnerships:** Establish lines of communication with local schools, childcare facilities, and other organizations serving youth in your community. Offer to share trusted resources and educate community stakeholders about the importance of routine immunizations.
- **Remove barriers to well-child appointments:** Prepare to proactively support parents who may face barriers to well-child appointments.
 - Ensure non-English speaking parents know about the availability of translation services/providers who speak their language.
 - Alleviate concerns related to out-of-pocket costs for childhood immunizations.
 - For Medicaid families, be prepared to share health plan transportation resources and assist with arranging rides.
- **Leverage Medicaid member incentives—and help your patients claim them:** All HealthChoice Illinois Medicaid plans offer incentives for the completion of childhood immunizations. Remind parents about the availability of these rewards and offer guidance on how to take advantage of them.

Illinois School Immunization Requirements

Illinois state law defines the minimum immunization requirements for children enrolling or entering a childcare facility or school in Illinois.



[Minimum Immunization Requirements](#)



[Religious Exemptions Form](#)

Communications Templates and Tools

Member Communications Template

Dear Parent or Guardian:

(Provider name) wants to help you keep your child healthy and is here to help at every stage. It is important for your child to get checkups from the doctor on a regular schedule.

Your child should have a checkup every year. The checkup should include:

- Medical history, a physical exam, and vaccines
- Growth and development checks
- Eyesight, hearing and dental exams
- Nutrition review
- Lab tests with a blood lead level check
- Health education for parents or guardians
- Referrals for diagnosis and/or treatment when needed

This is an ideal time to talk about good eating habits and how to maintain a healthy weight for your child. We encourage you to share any worries about your child with your doctor.

If you have any further questions, please call Member Services at your Medicaid Managed Care Health Plan or (provider name).

Sample Phone Call Scripts

Well Visits and On-Track Vaccinations

“Hi! This is [name] from [practice name]. I am calling to touch base regarding your child’s wellness visit and vaccinations. [Provider name] thinks it is very important to keep these appointments to assess your child’s growth, track their milestones, and make sure they are up to date with the immunizations necessary to protect them from vaccine-preventable disease. Please give us a call if you have any questions or if there is anything that we can do for you. See you soon!”

Newborn Appointments

“Hi! This is [name] from [practice name]. I am calling on behalf of everyone at [practice name] to congratulate you on the arrival of your baby. We are so thrilled for you and your family! As you may know, newborn checkups and on-time administration of vaccines are very important to protect the health of your new little one. I’m calling to make sure your checkups are scheduled and help answer any questions you may have. See you soon!”

Sample Text Messages

“Vaccines are one of the best ways to keep your child healthy and safe. Keeping up with routine vaccinations helps protect your child against harmful and sometimes deadly diseases. Contact our office at [phone number] to schedule an appointment.”

“As you grab school supplies, don't forget vaccines! Ensure your student is ready for the first day. Schedule today: [Link]”

“[Practice name] is offering a friendly reminder that your child's wellness visit and/or immunizations are due. On-time immunizations keep them healthy so they can thrive! Please call our office at [phone number] to schedule your child's appointment. See you soon!”

“Congratulations from [practice name] on your new baby! Newborn checkups ensure they're thriving. And immunizations help their immune system learn to recognize and resist viruses. If you've already scheduled your appointment, we'll see you soon. Call us at [phone number] if you need an appointment.”

Other Trustworthy Outreach Resources

Vaccine Outreach - Social Media Toolkits and Education


American Academy of Pediatrics - Illinois Chapter

Access ready-to-use flyers, handouts, posters, visual aids, digital resources, and strengths-based messaging

 [AAP - Illinois Chapter](#)

Vaccine Confidence Campaign *American Academy of Pediatrics*

Find key messages, social media graphics, a free image gallery, frequently asked questions, and related resources to support provider immunization efforts

 [AAP - Vaccine Confidence Campaign](#)

Talking to Parents About Immunizations – Resource Toolkit *Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH)*

Utilize infographics, fact sheets, talking points, and other helpful materials from the IDPH.

 [IDPH Vaccine Toolkit](#)

Immunization Resources *Cook County Department of Public Health*

Find information specific to Illinois school vaccine requirements along with helpful resources related to COVID-19 and influenza vaccination.

 [CCDPH Resources](#)

Managed Care Specifics



**HealthChoice
Illinois**

Illinois Department of
Healthcare and Family Services

Improving Access to Services

Medicaid health plans in Illinois offer services, such as transportation, to improve patients' access to care.

Transportation information: Illinois Medicaid health plans

Find information below to connect Medicaid enrollees to transportation resources. Encourage members to contact member services at their health plan for answers to questions about transportation benefits.

<p>Aetna Better Health of Illinois</p>	<p>Call Member Services at 1-866-329-4701, Monday - Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m</p> <p>Arrange transportation at least 2 business days before a scheduled appointment.</p>
<p>Blue Cross Community Health Plan</p>	<p>Call Modivcare at 1-877-831-3148, Monday - Friday, 8:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.</p> <p>Arrange your ride with Modivcare at least 3 days before your appointment. Members can schedule a ride using the Modivcare app, available for download in the Apple App Store and Google Play Store.</p>
<p>CountyCare</p>	<p>Call Member Services at 312-864-8200, Monday - Friday, 8:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.; and Saturday, 9 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.</p> <p>Arrange your ride at least 3 days before your appointment. Members can schedule a ride using the Modivcare app, available for download in the Apple App Store and Google Play Store.</p>
<p>Meridian</p>	<p>Call Meridian's transportation line at 866-796-1165, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week</p> <p>Arrange transportation at least 3 days before your appointment. Members can schedule a ride using the MTM Link Member app, available for download in the Apple App Store and Google Play Store.</p>
<p>Molina</p>	<p>Call Molina's transportation line at 844-644-6354, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week</p> <p>Arrange transportation at least 3 days before your appointment. Members can schedule a ride using the MTM Link Member app, available for download in the Apple App Store and Google Play Store.</p>

Illinois Medicaid health plans: Member immunization information and rewards programs

Health plan rewards programs aim to incentivize members to complete preventive health services. Remind Medicaid enrollees about these rewards, and familiarize yourself with messaging members may receive from their health plan.

	Member-Friendly Immunization Resources	Health Plan Rewards Program Information
Aetna Better Health of Illinois	Childhood Wellness Visit Checklist (English) [PDF] Childhood Wellness Visit Checklist (Spanish) [PDF]	Aetna Better Care® rewards program
Blue Cross Community Health Plan	Maternal and Infant Health Programs and Services Member Resources	BCCHP Healthy Incentives program
CountyCare	CountyCare Immunization Hub	CountyCare Rewards program
Meridian	Child Immunizations Benefits and Services	Meridian Healthy Rewards program
Molina	Immunizations Molina Healthcare	Molina Member Rewards program

Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment (EPSDT): Provider Toolkits

Illinois Medicaid plans are required each year to inform their members about EPSDT benefits, which cover regular screening services for infants, children, and adolescents under age 21 as required under federal Medicaid law.

To educate Medicaid providers about these requirements, IAMHP’s member health plans develop EPSDT toolkits for providers, accessible from the links below.

Aetna Better Health of Illinois	Link to EPSDT Toolkit
Blue Cross Community Health Plan	Link to EPSDT Toolkit
CountyCare	Find EPSDT information under “Preventive Health Guidelines”
Meridian	Find EPSDT information under “Documents and Forms”
Molina	Link to EPSDT Toolkit

EPSDT: Sample Health Plan Communications to Members

Member Name
Permanent Address
City, State, Zip

Dear Parent or Guardian:

(Provider) wants to help you keep your baby healthy. During the first 15 months of life, your baby should get at least six well-child exams by the time they are 15 months old. These exams help make sure your child is growing up healthy. If the doctor finds a problem, it is treated and watched.

These visits are free and can be scheduled at:

- 2 months
- 4 months
- 6 months
- 9 months
- 12 months
- 15 months

These exams involve:

- Medical history, a physical exam, and vaccines
- Growth and development checks
- Eyesight, hearing, and dental exams
- Nutrition review
- Lab tests with a blood lead level check
- Health education for parents or guardians
- Referrals for diagnosis and/or treatment when needed

This is an ideal time to ask any questions about the health of your baby and talk about vaccines needed to protect your baby from getting sick.

If you have any further questions, please call Member Services at (phone number)

Sincerely,
Health Plan