

# NMDOH News Brief

# IMMUNIZATION



## Respiratory Virus Season 2024 Updates

We anticipate the cooler weather of fall and winter will bring with it respiratory illnesses. This trend happens each year, typically starting in September or October. While flu is well-established as a fall/winter disease, COVID-19 has shown us that it can make waves in summer and spring as well. Last winter was a much larger COVID wave in the winter months than summer, so we anticipate that could happen this winter as well.

Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) is also a seasonal virus and causes

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## Mobile Vaccine Team provides vaccinations to New Mexico's underserved communities

Andrea Romero  
Immunization Program Manager

During the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020, the need for a mobile vaccine team was a priority as part of logistics for vaccine equity efforts. The mobile vaccine team traveled to rural underserved areas of New Mexico needing COVID-19 vaccine access. As part of respiratory season, influenza vaccine was incorporated in the efforts with COVID vaccine.

The populations served are primarily adults that are uninsured/underinsured and/or have limited access to a provider or pharmacy. This respiratory season the team will provide the new COVID vaccine presentations, influenza vaccine, and some routine vaccine catch-up opportunities for children, such as MMR to protect against measles and other vaccines listed in the 2024-25 New Mexico Childcare/Pre-School/School Entry [Immunization Requirements](#). The team has partnered with

**Mobile Vaccine Team**  
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Here's a sample of the adult vaccine marketing toolkit that is now updated with a new icy-blue color palette. Flyers, postcards, mini-flyers and a bookmark will be available soon.

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## SHOT BRIEFS

Anna Pentler, MPH, MBA  
NM Immunization Coalition

### New NMSIIS Alert for MenB vaccine

The New Mexico Statewide Immunization Information System (NMSIIS) now has a prompt for teenagers 16 and older to remind providers about the Meningococcal B vaccine. This has caused some confusion for providers. Men ACWY dose 2 is required after age 16 for 12th grade, but Men B is not currently required for high school in NM and does not fulfill the requirement for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Men ACWY vaccine.

While the Men B vaccine is not required for school entry, it is an important vaccine that should be discussed with the teen and their parent. Many colleges require Men B vaccine for incoming freshmen, and most meningitis cases in colleges are due to the Men B strain. The NMSIIS prompt is good reminder to have the discussion with all your 16-year-old patients and their parents to determine if Men B vaccine should be given at that visit.

A new pentavalent meningococcal vaccine, Penbraya, covers the meningococcal strains ABCWY, so can be used for the second dose of Men ACWY

## Immunization Program *Staffing announcements*

### Daisy Lujan VFC Health Educator

We are pleased to announce that Daisy Lujan joined the Santa Fe Immunization Program as the VFC Health Educator on September 30.

Daisy has been in the medical field for 15 years. She started her career in the pharmacy and since then she has graduated with an Associate of Science Degree in Medical Assisting. She is also certified as a Community Health Worker; through doing this, she found her passion in educating providers, clinical staff, and patients on variety of health-related topics.

Born and raised in Santa Fe, she continues to reside in the City Different with her wonderful husband and three fur babies. Daisy loves to bake—her family and friends savor her Chocoflans (impossible cake). She enjoys spending time outdoors, biking and fishing. In her spare time, Daisy enjoys junk journaling and her favorite color is purple. She is excited to join the VFC Program—join us in welcoming Daisy to the team!



and the first dose of Men B. If Penbraya is used for the first dose of Men B, the second dose of Men B should be Trumenba, which is made by the same manufacturer.

Just a reminder that the Vaccines for Children (VFC) Program covers all ACIP recommended vaccines for children through age 18, including Men B. Once a person turns 19, they are no longer covered by VFC. So,

it's important for parents to understand the opportunity to vaccinate without cost to them is before the teen turns 19.

### Resources

- Public Health Offices [link](#)
- Vaccine Provider Locater [Map](#)
- Vaccine Record Access [link](#)
- For assistance with obtaining vaccine record call NMSIIS helpdesk 1-833-882-6454
- NMDOH Nurse Helpline: 1-833-796-8773 (1-833-SWNurse)

## “Boo to the Flu” is Back

The popular community flu shot clinic event, Boo to the Flu, will

be available again this fall in Las Cruces on Saturday, October 19 from 8am-12pm. No cost for flu shots for adults and children ages 6 months and up.

Mountainview Regional Medical

Center will provide flu vaccine for adults and children and Three Crosses Regional Hospital will be providing flu vaccine for adults only. They will facilitate the event in partnership with the NM Department of Health.



## Sunsetting of Bridge Access Program

The Bridge Access Program (BAP) ended on August 22, with the FDA announcement about the new 2024-25 COVID-19 vaccine. The original end date of the BAP was scheduled for December 31. With the sudden end of this program, many are asking if there will be free COVID-19 vaccine for uninsured adults in the state as the BAP focused on this population and partnered with pharmacies for access under eTrueNorth.

The Immunization Program has procured COVID-19 vaccine for the uninsured/underinsured adults in New Mexico under 317 Federal funds in replacement of the BAP funds. Uninsured/underinsured adults can obtain a free updated COVID vaccination at their local [Public Health Office](#).

### Mobile Van Team

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communities at local events statewide and the demand for mobile clinics remains high. The team has become a trusted partner in communities for holding clinics onsite where underserved populations attend, such as a church event or health fair.

The partnership in the community has been a recognized strong bond and the team continues to be asked to return to the communities to hold vaccine clinics where access is needed. The mobile team has been recognized at a national level for providing vaccine access throughout the state, and other states are looking into how they can do the same effort. The mobile vaccine team continues to be on the road to destinations around the state to protect communities from vaccine-preventable diseases.

## Respiratory Virus Season

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most cases in fall and winter. We are fortunate to have updated vaccines for flu and COVID that will protect against new variants; the still new RSV vaccine helps protect newborn babies through maternal immunization during pregnancy, and protects older adults through immunizing those 75 and older and those 60-74 with increased risk of complications from RSV.

All three vaccines for older adults can be given simultaneously if indicated. Here's the latest on respiratory season vaccines:

### Influenza

The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommends everyone 6 months and older get an updated

influenza vaccine for the 2024-25 season. Adults aged 65 years and older are preferentially recommended to receive high dose or adjuvanted flu vaccine and children aged 6 months through 8 years may need 2 doses given a month apart in their first season getting immunized. ACIP recommends people get Influenza vaccine in the fall (October)—it takes about 2 weeks for the body to develop sufficient immunity from the flu vaccine to be protective. However, it is not too late to get the vaccine well into the winter months and providers should continue to offer it as long as there is still influenza circulating in the community. Flu vaccine is not 100% effective but does reduce the chance of getting severe disease or needing to be

hospitalized by 40-60%. This year's flu vaccine protects against 3 variants of the virus: A/H1N1, A/H3N2 and B/Victoria.

### COVID-19

ACIP recommends everyone 6 months and older get a dose of updated COVID vaccine this season. On August 22, FDA approved updated mRNA COVID-19 vaccines to better protect against current variants. These updated mRNA vaccines include a monovalent (single) component that corresponds to the Omicron variant KP.2 strain of SARS-CoV-2.

The updated mRNA COVID-19 vaccines include Pfizer-BioNTech Comirnaty and Moderna Spikevax, both are approved for ages 12

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## NATIONAL IMMUNIZATION CONFERENCE

The National Immunization Conference was held on August 12-14 in Atlanta GA. The Immunization Program and New Mexico Immunization Coalition were in attendance. This is the first year that the conference has been held since the COVID-19 pandemic. The attendance reached 1,600 in total. Vaccine sessions consisted of RSV, maternal, pandemic preparedness, HPV, confidence, funding, data quality, measles, COVID-19, coverage, equity, and more. Recordings of the sessions are available [online](#). See the Photo Gallery on Page 7 for fun shots at the NIC photo booth.



This year, 82 providers from 30 counties around the state participated in Got Shots! Every year many children receive back-to-school vaccinations through Got Shots. This year, tracking data shows 3,390 children received over 8,200 shots through this effort, with 68% of providers reporting.

*Thank you to our partners at NM Primary Care Association, NMIC, BCBSNM, Presbyterian, Molina, and United Healthcare.*

**Respiratory Virus Season**

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and older and are authorized for emergency use for children 6 mo-11 yrs., official [press release](#). In addition, a traditional protein-based vaccine, Novavax, was recently approved for use for ages 12+, official [press release](#). Certain children 6 months through 4 yrs. may need 2-3 doses based on manufacturer guidance, and those with certain immunocompromising conditions may need multiple doses based on age and manufacturer guidance. CDC advises when possible, people should stay with the brand of COVID vaccine that they have previously received. Those who have had COVID disease recently may want to wait 4 months to be vaccinated for optimal response. COVID vaccine is not 100% effective but does reduce the chance of getting severe disease, needing to be hospitalized or dying;.

**RSV**

There are now three RSV vaccines licensed by the FDA for use in adults 60+: GSK's AREXVY, Moderna's mRESVIA, Pfizer's ABRYSVO. Everyone 75+ should get a one-time dose of RSV vaccine. People ages 60–74 who are at increased risk of severe RSV, have certain chronic medical conditions, such as lung or heart disease, or who live in nursing homes, should receive a single dose of RSV vaccination. At this point RSV is not an annual vaccine, so there's no need to receive a dose every season. While RSV is seasonal and tends to increase during fall and winter, older adults who are indicated to get this vaccine can get it at any time. Immunity lasts for more than one year, so should protect through the RSV season and beyond.

ACIP and CDC recommend Pfizer RSVpreF (ABRYSVO) for maternal vaccination during pregnancy as a one-time dose between 32-36 weeks of gestation using seasonal administration, Sept.-Jan. This timing will help protect the newborn born during RSV season

**Protecting NM's Farmworkers**

The CDC has launched a \$5 million initiative to provide seasonal flu shots this fall to about 200,000 livestock workers in states hardest hit by the bird flu outbreak. NMDOH Immunization Program has received funds to conduct interventions to protect farm workers against bird/cow flu and against seasonal influenza, including onsite vaccination efforts and an educational campaign promoting flu vaccination.

Only livestock farm workers are eligible for additional CDC funded vaccines. NMDOH will use existing flu supply to vaccinate families and other close contacts during outreach efforts with the mobile vaccine team.

through passive immunity during pregnancy. RSV vaccine can be given with other vaccines during pregnancy (Flu, Tdap, and COVID-19).

Infants born during the RSV season (Oct.- Mar.) should receive one dose of the RSV monoclonal antibody, Nirsevimab (Beyfortus) at birth or within one week after if the birth parent did not receive RSV vaccine during pregnancy at least 14 days prior to delivery. Nirsevimab is recommended for all infants younger than 8 mos. entering their first RSV season. Except in rare circumstances, most infants younger than 8 mos. do not need nirsevimab if they were born 14 or more days after their birth parent got an RSV vaccine. High risk infants 8-19 mos. should also get Nirsevimab.

**ACIP RSV Immunization Seasonal Recommendations Summary\***

	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug
<b>Infants and children</b> (nirsevimab)		Administer during October–March in most of the continental U.S.						Providers can adjust administration schedules based on local epidemiology.†				
<b>Pregnant people</b> (Pfizer, Abrysvo)	Administer during September–January in most of the continental U.S.				ONLY jurisdictions whose seasonality differs from most of the continental US may administer outside of September–January.†							
<b>Adults 60+</b> (Pfizer, Abrysvo; GSK, Arexvy)	Offer as early as vaccine is available using shared clinical decision making; continue to offer vaccination to eligible adults who remain unvaccinated.											

Recommended timing for immunization (Green) | Timing NOT recommended for immunization, except in limited situations (as indicated in chart) (Red)

\*The current slide reflects only the seasonal timing of vaccination for each population. For full RSV vaccine recommendations, please see: <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/acip-recs-specific/rsv.html>  
 †In jurisdictions with RSV seasonality that differs from most of the continental United States, including Alaska, southern Florida, Guam, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, U.S.-affiliated Pacific Islands, and U.S. Virgin Islands, providers should follow state, local, or territorial guidance.

## Thirty Years of Vaccines for Children: A Public Investment All Americans Can Celebrate

Claire Hannan, MPH  
*Assn. of Immunization Managers*

*(taken from October 1, 2024: [A Special Message from AIM on the 30th Anniversary of the VFC](#))*

Imagine you had the power to save a child's life. That was the motivation thirty years ago when Congress created the [Vaccines for Children Program \(VFC\)](#), which officially launched 30 years ago today on October 1, 1994. By removing many of the financial hassles that parents and health care providers faced in providing recommended vaccines to nearly half of America's children, this single legislative act made great leaps in promoting a culture of prevention and reducing vaccine-preventable disease. Today is a good time to reflect on what has been achieved over the past three decades and how we can best continue to protect America's most valuable resource: our nation's children.

VFC was created in response to widespread measles outbreaks in the late 1980s that hit low-income communities particularly hard. Recognizing that cost was the major barrier to getting children vaccinated, the U.S. government created

an entitlement program that provides vaccines at no cost to children who qualify for Medicaid, are un- or under-insured, or are Alaska Native or American Indian. Because of this program, more than half of the nation's children receive recommended vaccines at no cost to their families and vaccine-preventable disease outbreaks, like those caused by measles, became much less common.

The results generated by the VFC program are extraordinary: the [CDC estimates that this single program helped](#) prevent 508 million cases of illness, 32 million hospitalizations, and 1,129,000 deaths - resulting in direct savings of \$540 billion and societal savings of \$2.7 trillion. Compared to the \$4.5 trillion annual budget of the U.S. health care system, the few billion dollars spent to reduce the toll of diseases we can prevent with vaccines is practically budget dust. Put simply, this is one of the greatest bipartisan public investments in U.S. history and one that all taxpayers can celebrate and be proud of.

While the program has produced remarkable results, there are significant challenges to maintaining this success. Retaining and growing the existing private sector network of providers, assuring adequate payment to participating providers, and incorporating innovative but more expensive new vaccines are paramount to sustaining access to the VFC

program. Pharmacies, leveraged to provide vaccinations during the COVID-19 pandemic, are underutilized as vaccinators of children and including them in the VFC program could significantly improve access to routine vaccinations, especially for children in rural areas where medical care may be scarce. Perhaps most challenging is combating the politicization and misinformation fueling vaccine hesitancy. We are working now to address these challenges, assure the program's success for the next thirty years and beyond, and find ways to build a similar program to provide for the vaccination of uninsured adults.

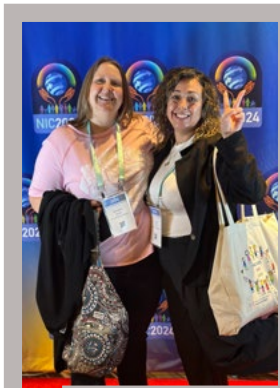
Especially at a time of deep cynicism about the government's ability to solve problems, the VFC program stands as a testament to the can-do American spirit to harness scientific innovation for the betterment of society. By working to make vaccination hassle-free, we can fulfill the government's fundamental responsibility to assure the health and safety of our citizens. Join us today as we celebrate all the VFC program has achieved and support its promise to assure a healthy future for the millions of babies born every year.

### HPV Awareness

The Immunization Program landing page for HPV awareness is live! Check it out here: <https://vaccine.doh.nm.gov/prevention/>

# Photo Gallery

The recent National Immunization Conference provided a fun photo booth for opportunities to capture the passion of attendees. The NM Department of Health staff is featured here!



➔ “Don’t Wait, Vaccinate” Partner Toolkits are available on the NMDOH [landing page](#) reminding New Mexicans to stay up-to-date on vaccines so families and loved ones can stay healthy for the upcoming holiday season. The vaccine provider map is also on the landing page where everyone can find a location in the community for vaccine access this respiratory season.

*Stay Protected This Season: Get Your Flu, RSV, & COVID vaccines to Keep New Mexicans Healthy and Together!*

**Contact us**

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