



IMPORTANT ROLE OF THE RIDOH STATE SUPPLIED VACCINE PROGRAM IN PROVIDING ROUTINE VACCINES

Had it with vaccine talk?
It still beats sick days like this.
Get vaccinated against flu, COVID-19, and RSV.



The measures announced by Governor McKee on September 12th to ensure continued access to COVID-19 vaccines in Rhode Island insurers came amid a renewed focus on vaccine access and reducing barriers to getting vaccines in arms. However, Rhode Island has long promoted vaccine access through the Rhode Island Department of Health's State-Supplied Vaccine (SSV) Program, which provides enrolled providers with recommended routine vaccines for children and adults at no cost for use with all eligible patients, regardless of their insurance status.

The SSV Program began in 1992 for childhood immunizations and was expanded in 2008 to include most adult immunizations. Today, the program includes over 400 enrolled providers, from internal medicine offices to pediatric practices, primary care practitioners to specialists, community health centers to school-based clinics, pharmacies to emergency medical services, and more, with multiple new providers enrolling for the first time each program year. Staff in RIDOH's Office of Immunization oversee all program operations, with a dedicated Immunization Representative assigned to each enrolled SSV provider to assist with operational issues and conduct annual site visits to monitor vaccine storage and handling practices as well as compliance with program requirements.

SSV providers can also receive support from an Office of Immunization staff member for

immunization quality improvement initiatives aimed at increasing uptake of recommended child and adult immunizations.

While physician offices and medical clinics of all types make up the majority of the SSV program's enrolled providers, pharmacies – particularly independent retail pharmacies as well as closed-door pharmacies serving specialized patient populations – represent a smaller but increasingly important contingency. These providers play a significant role in increasing vaccine access Statewide: pharmacists in Rhode Island can administer any routine immunization to adults, as well as flu and COVID-19 vaccines to anyone 3 years of age and older – and indeed, many patients receive these vaccines either by walking into their local pharmacy or at clinics run by independent pharmacy staff at partner agencies such as long-term care facilities, group homes, community centers, local housing authorities, and more.

Protecting and expanding access to recommended vaccines is an important way to keep Rhode Islanders safe from vaccine-preventable diseases. For more information about the SSV Program, including how to enroll, visit health.ri.gov/immunization/healthcare-professionals

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Leadership Corner: A Conversation with Dr. Elizabeth Lange on Vaccine Access in Rhode Island



Building on Rhode Island's long-standing commitment to ensuring equitable vaccine access, we spoke with [Dr. Elizabeth Lange, MD, FAAP](#), primary care pediatrician and Chair of the [CTC-RI Board of Directors](#), about how the State-Supplied Vaccine (SSV) Program supports providers and families across the state. Dr. Lange shared insights into how Rhode Island's bulk purchasing model helps maintain consistent vaccine availability, the importance of timing for seasonal respiratory illness protection, and the impact of universal vaccine access on health equity—particularly for children and families served by community-based practices.

Q HOW DOES THE STATE'S BULK PURCHASING PROGRAM HELP ENSURE CONSISTENT VACCINE ACCESS FOR YOUR PATIENTS, AND WHAT CHALLENGES DO YOU FACE WHEN THERE ARE DELAYS IN VACCINE AVAILABILITY LIKE WE SAW WITH COVID VACCINES THIS FALL?

A Having a vaccine ordering hub centralized at RIDOH guarantees that there is always enough vaccine supply in the state for all patients. Rather than ordering stock from each individual vaccine company (of which there are quite a few!) and wait for each shipping timeline, RI primary care offices place one complete order within the SSV program. This time efficiency and cost savings has many benefits – cost savings for insurers who pay for the vaccines, lifted administrative burden for the offices who order vaccines, and continued access without shortages for the patients who need the vaccines. Universal purchase is available for all vaccines that are approved by ACIP and signed by the CDC director. This season there was a little delay in ordering RI's COVID-19 vaccine for primary care offices due to a delay waiting for the CDC director's signature.

Q NOW THAT COVID VACCINES ARE AVAILABLE THROUGH THE STATE PROGRAM AFTER RECENT DELAYS, WHAT SHOULD PARENTS KNOW ABOUT TIMING FOR FALL RESPIRATORY ILLNESS PROTECTION—AND IS IT TOO LATE TO BENEFIT FROM VACCINATION THIS SEASON?

A The seasonal respiratory vaccines provide excellent protection for patients of all ages from contracting a significant flu, COVID or RSV infection, as some of these viral infections are so serious as to require patient hospitalization. The best timing for these vaccines is two weeks before the illness rates increase in RI. Since this date is hard to predict most medical professionals recommend receiving these preventable vaccines in the month of October, the de facto start of respiratory season in New England.

Q BEYOND THE LOGISTICS OF PURCHASING AND DISTRIBUTION, WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES A PROGRAM LIKE THIS MAKE IN YOUR ABILITY TO PROTECT CHILDREN IN THE COMMUNITY, PARTICULARLY THOSE FROM LOWER-INCOME FAMILIES OR THOSE WITH PUBLIC INSURANCE?

A The foundation of the SSV program is an economies of scale financial approach to vaccine purchase. With a central ordering hub, RI is able to purchase all vaccines at the CDC wholesale price which is much more cost efficient than each individual office purchasing vaccines. This universal purchase also renders access to vaccines regardless of a patient's insurance type, which means that all RI citizens are eligible to receive vaccines in this program. Year after year, RI's vaccine rates rank highest in the nation, a true testament to the importance and value of universal vaccine purchasing impacting access as well as a strong primary care infrastructure to counsel and deliver these vaccines