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STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
LANSING

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M E M O R A N D U M

DATE: March 30, 2020
TO: Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan Immunization Providers
FROM: MDHHS Division of Immunization
SUBJECT: Important Key Points on Vaccination Services During & After the COVID-19 Pandemic

As we all work together to bring services to our community during the coronavirus outbreak, there may be times when our routine responsibilities may be halted, thus making preventative services (i.e., immunizations and well visits) unable to occur. We understand that your practice may become inundated with tending to sick patients. MDHHS Division of Immunization has some key points to keep in mind as we navigate care during the coronavirus outbreak:

- For any potential office visit, consider screening patients ahead of time to review health status.
- To limit patient waiting room exposure, have the patient, parent/guardian wait in their car and then text them to come into the office when you are ready to bring them back for their appointment.
- Be sure that staff understand CDC guidance for vaccinations during sick visits:
 - CDC "Vaccines when your child is sick" www.cdc.gov/vaccines/parents/visit/sick-child.html
 - If your office is not currently conducting routine services, please keep in mind that as soon as feasible you will want to bring patients back to the office for wellness services (including immunizations). This will be important in helping maintain the health of your patients, and to help prevent future vaccine preventable diseases.
 - When your office transitions back to routine care, you may find patients who are behind on immunizations.
 - Use of the immunization catch-up schedule will be essential to ensure patients are caught up on the recommended vaccines. The catch-up schedule is recommended to be used when the patient **starts late or is more than one month behind**. Once the patient is caught up on their immunizations the recommended schedule should be followed:
 - Centers for Disease Control (CDC) Immunization Schedules (routine, catch-up, and catch-up guidance): www.cdc.gov/vaccines/schedules/index.html; www.cdc.gov/vaccines/schedules/hcp/imz/catchup.html (scroll down to the section "Vaccine Catch-Up Guidance" for vaccine specific job aides)
 - Please refer to the following links for additional information:
 - CDC's "Recommended and Minimum Ages and Intervals Between Doses of Routinely Recommended Vaccines" guidance: www.cdc.gov/vaccines/pubs/pinkbook/downloads/appendices/a/age-interval-table.pdf
 - CDC's "General Best Practice Guidelines for Immunizations" "Timing and Spacing of Immunobiologics" (Table 3-1): www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/acip-recs/general-recs/timing.html

- Once the outbreak subsides, the recommended immunization schedule should be followed unless the patient starts late or is more than one month behind in which case the catch-up schedule should be followed.
- Simultaneous administration is always recommended and is even more critical when there is uncertainty whether a patient will return for additional doses of vaccine. Assess patients for ALL vaccines due at each visit and use combination vaccines when indicated.
- MCIR will display accelerated or earliest date to vaccinate for each vaccine. This date may be used to vaccinate if the provider feels the patient may not be able to return for a visit. Use MCIR and the CDC immunization schedules to ensure vaccination needs are met. A screen shot of how MCIR displays the accelerated date may be found in the MCIR reference guide at: www.mcir.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/PERSON-User-Reference-Guide.pdf.
- MCIR recall is a tool that can be used to help identify and contact individuals who have fallen behind on their immunizations. When your office begins to move back to routine care take advantage of the Recall functionality in MCIR. For help on performing the recall function in MCIR, contact your MCIR help desk. Visit <https://www.mcir.org/providers/contact-regions/> for contact information.

Providers, local health departments, health systems, and pharmacies may be limiting patient care. Even with limitations, we appreciate your efforts to reduce missed opportunities for vaccination whenever possible. Please help keep your patients informed regarding services:

- It is important to have the patient, parent/guardian know that the service might not currently be available at your office or at another location.
- It is recommended that the patient, parent/guardian call ahead to ask about what services are being offered.
- Pharmacies may be an option to receive some recommended vaccines. It is important to call ahead to check on service times and ages served.
- **Note:** Pharmacies do not participate in the Vaccines for Children (VFC) program and will not be able to provide immunizations to this population.

Special Note on Storage and Handling: Temperature monitoring and inventory management is still crucial, even for clinics that are temporarily unable to provide vaccine services. Be sure inventory is monitored to rotate soon-to-expire vaccines up front, and that expired vaccine **never** be administered. Best practices highlight the need for daily temperature documentation for units storing vaccine. However, if your entire clinic is closed and daily temperatures cannot be assessed, ensure your temperature monitoring system is able to log temperatures during the closure timeframe. Check your data logger batteries, ensure your emergency response plan is up-to-date, and be familiar with how your backup location may be operating during this time. If you have an alarm system, be sure this is working properly. When your clinic re-opens, review all logged temperatures before providing vaccines again. Handle all excursions immediately and follow through appropriately. If you are a VFC provider, you must follow guidance outlined in the Michigan VFC Resource Guide (www.michigan.gov/vfc), and contact your Local Health Department for any questions or concerns.

Keep in mind that vaccinating can indirectly help our state respond to COVID-19. When we vaccinate against influenza, pertussis, pneumonia, etc. and thereby decrease hospitalizations from vaccine-preventable disease, this contributes to flattening the curve with regard to **preventing additional burden on the healthcare system**. We know vaccines save lives, and we appreciate your efforts in vaccinating Michiganders, whether you're managing clinics or coordinating care to refer patients to other providers. We thank you for your passion and partnership during this time.