



News Release

For immediate release: May 5, 2010

(10-076)

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Childhood vaccine program to continue after previously being cut

All Washington children will again have access to HPV vaccine

OLYMPIA — Washington’s program that buys vaccine for all kids in the state has been saved thanks to timely new funding from health plans. Some state funding for the program had been cut last year, with the rest scheduled to end May 1, 2010. A public-private partnership has closed that budget gap and restored the program.

The cuts last year eliminated funding for human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine for children with private health insurance. Now that the program has been saved, HPV vaccine is back and all kids age 11–18 years can once again get it from the state program, along with all other vaccines.

Under the innovative public-private partnership, state funds that had been cut have been replaced with an assessment to the state from health plans. Now, some kids will be covered by federal funds and other kids will be covered with state funds through this assessment. Health insurers and self-insured plans will be assessed for vaccines given to the children they cover. This commitment to “universal childhood vaccine” ensures that all kids have access to vaccines they need to protect them from disease.

It also keeps things simple for health care providers and families, because providers won’t have to purchase and manage a separate vaccine supply for children with private health insurance. One change with the new funding is that vaccinators must track vaccine given to kids with private insurance.

“Vaccinating children is one of the best ways to keep them healthy,” said Secretary of Health Mary Selecky. “This new partnership means kids have continued access to vaccines that prevent disease, and it’s seamless for parents — that’s why we got together with our partners in the private sector to make this change.”

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“The good news is that families can continue getting immunized in their regular health care provider’s office,” said Dr. Beth Harvey, president of the Washington Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics. “This is the start of a long-term plan for improving immunization rates in our state. This is a positive outcome for children, physicians, the state, and insurers.”

The legislation that saved the vaccine program also created the Washington Vaccine Association. The association will manage payments from the health plans to the state.

“The health plans and other payers recognize the importance of childhood vaccinations and responded to the providers’ desire to maintain the state’s system of universal purchase,” noted Fred Potter, Washington Vaccine Association executive director. “We will be working hard over the coming weeks and months to make sure the system works well for everybody, providers, payers, and the State of Washington. But the true beneficiaries of this program are our state’s kids.”

Despite funding challenges over the past year, childhood immunizations remain a public health priority. Recent outbreaks of measles and chickenpox in our state show more must be done to protect our children and communities. Partnerships between state and local health and the private health care community are more important than ever.

More information about the [Washington Vaccine Association](http://www.wavaccine.org) (www.wavaccine.org) is available online. Call the [local health agency](http://www.doh.wa.gov/LHJMap/LHJMap.htm) (www.doh.wa.gov/LHJMap/LHJMap.htm) or the [WithinReach](http://www.withinreachwa.org) (www.withinreachwa.org) Family Health Hotline at 1-800-322-2588 for help finding a health care provider or an immunization clinic.

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Photo opportunities in Group Health Cooperative clinics are available on request.

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