

Deciding to Conduct an Immunization Event

Congratulations—you've decided to conduct an immunization event!

A critical part of the planning process for a successful immunization event is assessing needs and resources and establishing clear goals and implementation steps. The purpose of this guide and the associated Action Plan Worksheet, is to walk you through some important initial decisions.

Note that many of these decisions are interrelated rather than sequential. For example, decisions about when to conduct an event may be influenced by the type of vaccine (eg, influenza), the target population (eg, college students headed back to campus), or a related event (eg, date of local health fair). You may need to revisit your answers to some questions as you work through the action plan.



The purpose of this guide is to walk you through some important initial decisions.

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Deciding to Conduct an Immunization Event: Step-By-Step

- Articulate your vision.
- Determine what is needed, permitted, and possible.
- Narrow your focus.
- State your goal.
- Establish measures of success.

Articulate Your Vision

The first question you need to consider is, what do you want to achieve?

At this point, you may just have a broad idea in mind. For example, a group of student pharmacists and pharmacists in Maryland wanted to “improve vaccination rates through implementation of an influenza clinic that would provide free vaccinations on Election Day.”¹

Use the Action Plan Worksheet to articulate your vision for the immunization event as best as you can. Don’t worry about including too many details—you will fill those in as you work your way through this toolkit.

Determine What Is Needed, Permitted, and Possible

Many of the decisions and details about your immunization event will be determined or influenced by what is needed, what is permitted, and what is possible. What immunization gaps exist in your community? What specific authority to immunize is granted by state laws and regulations? What type of event is best, based on your available time, personnel, and other resources?

What Is Needed?

There are a number of ways to uncover unmet community needs related to immunizations. Although this section provides some examples, they are far from the only approaches; don’t let them limit your thinking.

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Each year, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) produces CDC-approved immunization schedules for persons living in the United States.^{2,3} Comparing current recommendations for vaccine use by age and health condition with local demographic data from state government agencies and departments of health can reveal possible gaps in coverage:

- What is the age distribution of your local population? Which immunizations are most likely to be needed, based on the largest age groups? (For example, a large teenage population may need Tdap, influenza, meningococcal, or HPV vaccines.⁴)
- What health conditions are most prevalent or of greatest concern, based on demographic data? Which immunizations are recommended for those conditions? (For example, a large population of patients with diabetes may need influenza, pneumococcal, or hepatitis B vaccines.⁵)

A checklist titled “Which Vaccines Do I Need Today?” is available from the Immunization Action Coalition and provided with this guide. Reviewing this list of indications for various vaccines could spark some additional ideas about unmet community needs.

The Immunization Action Coalition also offers a chart titled [“Before You Vaccinate Adults, Consider Their ‘H-A-L-O!’”](#) The chart (provided with this guide) lists indicated vaccines based on patients’ health conditions, age, lifestyle, and occupation. Reviewing this chart also could spark ideas about unmet community needs.



ACIP Immunization Schedules

[Learn More](#) →

Immunization Action Coalition

[Learn More](#) →

The CDC VaxView websites provide vaccination coverage data at the national, regional, and state levels by age groups.⁶ Interactive maps, trend lines, bar charts, and other presentations enable you to pinpoint areas and groups with lower vaccination coverage. Data from the CDC National Immunization Surveys—a group of phone surveys used to monitor vaccination coverage among children 19 to 35 months of age and teens 13 to 17 years, as well as flu vaccinations for children 6 months to 17 years—are published in the *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR)*.^{7,8}



VaxView Websites

[Learn More](#) →

**CDC National Immunization Surveys
MMWR Articles**

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Because each community is unique, discussions with the state or local health department or immunization coalition can provide valuable insights. For example, the state health agency can provide information about cases of vaccine-preventable diseases. Other possible topics include:

- Which populations are difficult to reach?
- What prevents patients and caregivers from receiving needed immunizations?
- What hinders other healthcare professionals from providing needed care and immunizations?

A process known as *community mapping* is useful for identifying potential assets and partners in your neighborhood.⁹ Building a community map—by hand or using simple online tools such as Google Maps—can help you better understand how your community is structured and how resources are distributed. Mapping also can help you visualize which areas in your community have the lowest immunization rates and where pockets of under- and un-immunized people are mainly concentrated. (See the document titled “[Appendix A–Community Mapping](#)” for complete details.)

What Is Permitted?

Every state has its own statutes and regulations about who has authority to *prescribe* (ie, order) vaccines and who has authority to *administer* vaccines. State-level limitations on a pharmacist’s authority to immunize are subject to change at any time. It is imperative that you check with the state board of pharmacy or pharmacy association before planning any immunization event to determine specifically what is permitted by state laws and regulations.

Questions to consider include:

- Are pharmacists permitted to administer *any* vaccine or only certain vaccines?
- Do pharmacists have direct authority to administer vaccines? Or must a physician authorize the pharmacist to administer vaccines through a prescription, protocol, or standing order?
- Are there any restrictions based on the age of the patient?
- Are student pharmacists permitted to administer vaccines?
- Are there any additional state-specific requirements for immunizing pharmacists?



Check with your state board of pharmacy or pharmacy association before planning any immunization event to verify what is permitted by state law.

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If for any reason you are not able to administer immunizations, don't think it spells the end of your immunization event. Recall that pharmacists always can advance public health by providing immunization education and advocacy or by facilitating vaccinations administered by other providers in their immunization neighborhood.

What Is Possible?

Once you have a good idea of what is needed in your community and what is permitted under state statutes and regulations, you need to consider what type of event is possible given your available resources.

How much time do you have? It typically takes approximately 7 months of planning to conduct a successful large-scale vaccine administration clinic.¹⁰ Smaller events held at (for example) a worksite or senior center usually require less lead time and less planning; in-store events may need the least amount of planning. In general, though, you should allow at least 3 to 6 months to plan your event.^{10,11}

How much staff do you have? A 4-hour flu vaccine clinic easily could attract more than 300 people. Typically, one pharmacist can administer immunizations to 20 to 30 patients over the course of 1 hour, assuming an efficient workflow (eg, other personnel are handling preliminary paperwork and billing). To accommodate this pharmacist/patient ratio, the hypothetical 4-hour clinic would need to be staffed by at least three pharmacists and three or four technicians, student pharmacists, or other support personnel as permitted by law.¹⁰ If you have fewer personnel resources, you would need to limit the number of people who could be immunized.

For larger events, consider involving other organizations in your community or other providers in your immunization neighborhood. Possible local partners include civic groups, faith-based organizations, patient support groups (eg, diabetes support groups), and public health groups.¹¹

How much funding do you have (eg, what's your budget)? Some decisions depend on whether you expect to be paid for the immunizations (eg, by billing insurance or requiring patient self-pay) or seek to provide low-cost or no-cost immunizations. Others depend on whether you will conduct an immunization event under the auspices of your employer or independently, on a *pro bono* basis. Do you need to purchase vaccines and ancillary supplies? Must you try to procure no-cost vaccines from your local public health department? Do you need to rent a facility or pay for staff time? Do you need to seek grant support from local civic organizations, foundations, or service organizations (eg, Rotary Club, Lions Club, Fraternal Order of Eagles)? The answers to these questions may influence the size, nature, and scope of the immunization event.



When planning an immunization event, consider how much time, staff, and funding you have.

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Narrow Your Focus

Armed with information about what is needed, permitted, and possible, you can begin to narrow your focus and make key decisions about event details. It is always best to keep things simple, especially if this is your first immunization event.

Pick a Target

Consider picking an immunization target:

- A specific vaccine.
- A specific vaccine-preventable illness, such as influenza or meningitis.
- A specific age group (eg, children, adolescents, adults, seniors).
- A specific local employer, organization, facility, or community group.
- A specific racial or ethnic group with an underimmunized population.
- A specific zip code or school with an uninsured, underinsured, or underimmunized population.

Give It a Shot

One simple approach for off-site immunization events is to offer a single vaccine to a group that uses the same insurance. This streamlines paperwork, vaccine administration, and billing. It may even be possible to have some forms filled out in advance.

An alternate approach is to conduct an immunization event in conjunction with another event, such as a community health fair, back-to-school event, or college fair at a local high school. Be creative! For example, a bridal expo could be the perfect place to educate attendees about immunizations required for foreign honeymoon locations or to administer needed vaccines. You also may consider working with an existing initiative, such as the “Vote & Vax” project that organizes flu clinics at polling sites on or around Election Day.


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Perhaps you want to tie your immunization event to a recognized national health observance, such as:

- World Immunization Week (April).
- National Infant Immunization Week (April).
- National Senior Health & Fitness Day (May).
- National Immunization Awareness Month (August).
- National Influenza Vaccination Week (November or December).

A complete list of health observances is available on the [healthfinder](#) website.

The theme of the observance will determine some of the details of your event. Don't forget American Pharmacists Month in October!



Resources

Vote & Vax

National Health Observances

[Learn More](#) →

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Decide on a Location

Based on your immunization target, will you hold your immunization event at the pharmacy or at an off-site location? It may make sense to go to where your target population is located. Examples include:

- Assisted living facilities.
- Day care centers.
- Family planning clinics.
- Homeless shelters.

If you seek to conduct a larger-scale immunization clinic, you will need to find a suitable location. Possibilities include (but certainly are not limited to) community centers, school gyms, and church halls. Information about finding appropriate venues for large events is provided in Guide 3, “Planning and Conducting a Large-Scale Immunization Event.”

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Select a Date

Do you have enough information to zero in on a date and time for your immunization event? In some cases, the date may be determined for you—for example, if you plan to conduct your event for a specific group or in conjunction with another event or a national health observance. The date may be influenced by which vaccine you will need and how much; some vaccines, such as influenza, need to be ordered months in advance. The start and end times of off-site events may be dictated by cold chain considerations: how long can you maintain the vaccines at the appropriate temperature?

Before you finalize the date, consult a calendar or website to ensure that your immunization event will not fall on a holiday, relevant religious observance, or other potentially problematic day (eg, home football game in a college town). You also may need to consult school academic calendars or other sources of information about local scheduling.

State Your Objective

By now, you should be able to craft a succinct objective for your immunization event. To the extent possible, your objective should be SMART:

- Specific.
- Measurable.
- Actionable.
- Realistic.
- Time-bound.

One way to make your objective measurable is to establish the minimum or maximum number of people you intend to vaccinate or educate. For example:

The objective of this immunization event is to provide 100 flu vaccinations to seniors at the Main Street Senior Center on Friday, October 12, from 1:00 PM to 5:00 PM. We will provide these vaccinations at no cost to interested seniors by billing Medicare and soliciting donations of needed supplies and personnel time.



Commit your objective to writing. By writing the objective down, you create a clear intention that guides planning and promotion and helps you measure success.

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Establish Measures of Success

An important part of any journey is knowing when you have arrived at your destination. How will you know? By selecting the destination before you set out.

The analogous question for immunization event planning is, how will you know if your event is successful?

The answer is, by establishing specific measures of success early during the planning process. You need to:

- Consider your evaluation techniques *before* the event.
- Implement your evaluation strategies *during* the event.
- Analyze your data *after* the event.

Your written objective often will set a benchmark for quantitative performance in terms of number of vaccinations administered. However, there are many other possible indicators of success and variables for evaluation. Guide 5 (“Evaluating the Immunization Event”) provides in-depth information on evaluating your event.

Next Steps

Are You Planning a:

Smaller Immunization Event (eg, in the pharmacy or at a specific facility)? See:

Guide 2
“Planning and Conducting a Small-Scale Immunization Event”

Larger Immunization Event? See:

Guide 3
“Planning and Conducting a Large-Scale Immunization Event”

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Action Plan Worksheet



Articulate Your Vision

1. What type of immunization event do you want to conduct?

2. What do you hope to achieve?

3. Why is it important to conduct this event?



What Is Needed, Permitted, and Possible?

Look back at your vision for an immunization event. How can you refine the vision based on unmet community needs, your authority to immunize, and your capabilities?



Narrow Your Focus

Describe the “what, when, and where” of your immunization event in as much detail as possible.

1. What type of immunization event will you conduct?

2. Where will you conduct the event?

3. When will you conduct the event?



State Your Objective

Create a written objective for your immunization event using the general construct: “The objective of this immunization event is to [what and how many] at [where] on [when]. We will provide these vaccinations [payment details].”