

HPV Vaccine Toolkit

Improving HPV Vaccine Rates in Your County



Introduction to the HPV Vaccination Improvement Toolkit

Welcome to the HPV Vaccination Improvement Toolkit, a comprehensive resource designed specifically for county health departments aiming to increase Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination rates in their communities. This toolkit is the result of research, practical experience, and lessons learned from the successful HPV vaccination initiative implemented in Genesee County, Michigan.

HPV is a significant public health concern, contributing to approximately 37,300 cancer cases annually in the United States (National Cancer Institute [NCI], 2024). Despite the availability of safe and effective vaccines, HPV vaccination rates remain suboptimal in many areas. This toolkit aims to bridge the gap between current vaccination rates and public health goals by providing county health departments with evidence-based strategies and practical tools to support their efforts. Your health department may choose to implement specific components of our program that best fit your team's capacity or utilize the entirety of the toolkit as a guide for your own work.

Drawing on our experience in Genesee County, where we successfully increased HPV vaccine completion rates and implemented innovative programs, such as dental office referrals, this toolkit offers a multifaceted approach to improving vaccination rates. It addresses key areas such as:

1. Assessment and Planning
2. Data Collection and Analysis
3. Stakeholder Engagement
4. Provider Education and Engagement
5. Community Outreach and Engagement
6. System Level Interventions
7. Communications Planning
8. Developing a Workplan

Each section of the toolkit provides detailed strategies, best practices, and resources that can be adapted to your local context. We've included practical tools such as provider survey templates, communication scripts, and evaluation frameworks to help you implement these strategies effectively.

Remember, improving HPV vaccination rates is a complex challenge that requires a coordinated effort across multiple stakeholders. This toolkit is designed to guide you through this process, helping you to develop a comprehensive and tailored approach for your county.

As you use this toolkit, keep in mind that flexibility and continuous improvement are key. We encourage you to adapt these strategies to your local needs, monitor your progress, and refine your approach as you learn what works best in your community.

Together, we can make significant strides in protecting our communities from HPV-related cancers. Let's get started on this public health journey!



Assessment and Planning

Establishing a Strong Foundation for HPV Vaccination Improvement

This section provides a roadmap for counties to establish a robust foundation for their HPV vaccination improvement efforts. The process begins with deciding on the most suitable project type based on your team's capacity.

When evaluating your resources, consider three key areas:

- **Staffing:** Assess available personnel, their expertise, and the time they can dedicate, including potential volunteers or partners from other organizations.
- **Funding:** Analyze your current budget and potential funding sources, including advertising and promotional funds.
- **Technological Resources:** Inventory tools such as data management systems, communication platforms, and specialized software.

Remember that resources can be expanded through strategic partnerships and grant opportunities, such as those offered by the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) for HPV prevention projects. A thorough resource assessment positions you to design a project aligned with your capabilities and identify areas needing additional support, setting the stage for a sustainable and effective HPV vaccination improvement initiative.

Some activities your health department may want to consider in the planning phase of the project may include:

- **Team Capacity:** Evaluate your health department's current workload and available personnel.
 - Conduct a survey of your staff using questions like those in the template provided. Ask about the current workload, expertise, and available time for new projects.
 - Review current job descriptions and responsibilities.
 - Hold team meetings to discuss capacity and interest in vaccination projects.
- **Existing Coalitions:** Research active HPV vaccination coalitions or workgroups in your region or state.
 - Check resources like the HPV Roundtable website for information on state coalitions.
 - Contact your state health department for information on local HPV initiatives.
 - Reach out to national organizations, such as the National HPV Vaccination Roundtable, or regional groups, like the HPV Vaccination Roundtable of the Southeast, for information on coalitions in your area.
 - Search for existing immunization coalitions and network members at immunizationcoalitions.org and reach out to coalitions directly.
- **Local Priorities:** Assess if HPV vaccination projects align with your county's current health priorities. Consider integrating it into existing programs or initiatives.
 - Review your county's current health improvement plan and strategic priorities.
 - Include reviewing any existing state cancer plans and oral health associations' strategic plans.
 - Analyze local health data to identify if HPV-related cancers are a significant issue in your community.
 - Discuss with local health officials and community leaders about the potential integration of HPV vaccination into existing health initiatives.
- **Funding Landscape:** Investigate potential funding sources, including state grants, federal programs, or private foundations.
 - Research grant opportunities from organizations like NACCHO.
 - Look into private foundations that support cancer prevention initiatives.
 - Consider partnering with local healthcare providers or pharmacies to share resources and identify potential private funding sources from vaccine distributors.



- **Political Climate:** Understand the local political landscape and identify potential barriers or support for HPV vaccination initiatives.
 - Review state policy in relation to vaccinations and HPV vaccine recommendations.
 - Include your state cancer plan, oral health plans, and other cancer-related strategic plans.
 - Meet with local elected officials to gauge their interest in vaccination advocacy and efforts.
- **Community Readiness:** Gauge the level of awareness and acceptance of HPV vaccination in your community.
 - Hold focus groups with parents and community members to discuss HPV vaccination, or partner with a university to facilitate this activity.
 - Distribute and collect data on awareness of HPV and the HPV vaccine, concerns, and trusted information sources.
 - Engage with local schools, community organizations, and healthcare providers to assess their knowledge and attitudes towards HPV vaccination.

Based on this initial assessment and activities, decide whether to:

- a) Join an existing coalition
- b) Form an internal workgroup or initiative
- c) Create a new county-wide coalition

By carefully evaluating resources, counties can make informed decisions about the most suitable project type and scale. These activities ensure that the chosen initiative is well-aligned with the county's capabilities and needs, setting the stage for a sustainable and effective HPV vaccination program.

As we transition into the next phase of the project, it is essential to focus on collecting baseline data. This critical step will provide a clear picture of the current HPV vaccination rates and related health indicators in your county, allowing for targeted interventions and measurable progress tracking.



Baseline Data Collection

Establishing a Starting Point

Collecting baseline data is a fundamental step in any public health initiative, providing a crucial starting point for measuring progress and identifying areas that require the most attention. For HPV vaccination improvement efforts, this process involves gathering comprehensive information on current vaccination rates, demographic trends, and related health indicators.

When collecting baseline data, it's important to gather information that is both relevant to HPV vaccination rates and reflective of your county's unique characteristics. This data will serve as a foundation for your entire project, helping you set realistic goals, identify disparities, and track improvements. Remember that data collection is not a one-time effort; it should be an ongoing process that allows you to adjust your strategies as needed.

Consider the following key aspects when collecting your baseline data:

- **Vaccination Rates:** Gather detailed information on HPV vaccination rates, including initiation and completion rates, broken down by age groups, gender, and geographic areas within your county.
- **Demographics:** Collect data on population demographics, including age distribution, racial and ethnic composition, and socioeconomic factors that may influence vaccination rates.
- **Immunizations Information Systems (IIS):** Identify if your state IIS is prompting vaccination as 'Due Now' or 'Recommended' at age 9. IIS systems and electronic medical record systems play a significant role in whether HPV vaccination is prioritized at age 9 or 11.
- **Healthcare Access:** Assess the distribution of healthcare providers, including pediatricians, family practitioners, pharmacists, and OB/GYNs who can administer HPV vaccines.
- **School Data:** Gather information on school enrollment and any existing school-based vaccination programs.
- **Insurance Coverage:** Analyze data on insurance coverage in your county, including the proportion of uninsured or underinsured individuals who may face barriers to vaccination.
- **Community Attitudes:** If possible, conduct surveys or focus groups to gauge community knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs about HPV vaccination.

By establishing a replicable baseline measure, you'll be better equipped to design focused interventions, allocate resources effectively, and demonstrate the impact of your efforts over time. The following steps will guide you through the process of collecting and analyzing this crucial baseline data.



Stakeholder Engagement

Mapping Out Your Partner Plan

Stakeholder engagement is a cornerstone of any successful HPV vaccination improvement project. Establishing and maintaining open relationships with a diverse range of stakeholders enable a deeper understanding of community needs and challenges supports the development of tailored strategies for different population segments, and fosters a sense of shared ownership and responsibility for improving vaccination rates.



Partner or power mapping is a strategic extension of stakeholder mapping.

It involves identifying not only who the key stakeholders are, but also their relative influence, interests, and relationships within the community. This approach helps prioritize engagement efforts and tailor strategies for maximum impact.

Key Stakeholder Groups

When mapping stakeholders, consider the following groups:

- **Healthcare Providers:** Including pediatricians, family practitioners, dentists, and OB/GYNs who can administer HPV vaccines.
- **Quality Improvement (QI) Teams within Healthcare Systems:** These teams are gatekeepers for reaching physicians and can support data-driven improvement initiatives.
- **Schools and Educational Institutions:** School nurses, administrators, and health educators are trusted community partners for outreach and vaccination events.
- **Community Organizations and Faith-Based Groups:** Local organizations and faith leaders can help address vaccine hesitancy and reach underserved populations.
- **Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) and Integrated Healthcare Systems:** These centers serve as hubs for comprehensive care, including vaccination.
- **Organizations with Community Health Workers (CHWs):** CHWs have direct, longitudinal contact with community members and are crucial for building trust and delivering consistent messaging. CHWs are generally connected to a local CHW association and are required to participate in continuing education credits.
- **Payors and Health Plans:** Medical directors, quality improvement leads, and population health managers can influence vaccination rates through policy, incentives, and data sharing.

Payors are incentivized to promote health and prevent disease because healthier populations lead to lower healthcare costs in the long term. Collaborating with payors and health plans enables public health agencies to leverage additional resources, align incentives, and scale effective interventions. This can include funding for small projects, insight into negotiating reimbursement, and communication tools developed by their teams.

Additionally, FQHCs serve as key vaccination sites for populations with limited access to traditional healthcare, and their dental teams work closely with the medical team. Integrated systems coordinate care across medical, dental, and behavioral health, allowing for streamlined workflows to vaccinate at every opportunity.



Partner Mapping: Assessing Influence and Interest

Steps for Effective Power Mapping:

- **Identify Key Stakeholders:** List all relevant individuals and organizations, including those above.
- **Assess Influence and Interest:** For each stakeholder, evaluate their level of influence (ability to affect change) and interest (motivation to support HPV vaccination).
- **Map Relationships:** Diagram how stakeholders are connected and how information and resources flow between them.
- **Identify Power Dynamics:** Note any formal or informal hierarchies and decision-making structures.
- **Develop Engagement Strategies:** Prioritize stakeholders with high influence and interest for direct engagement. For those with high influence but low interest, develop strategies to increase their motivation. For those with low influence but high interest, consider how to amplify their voices.
- **Monitor and Adapt:** Regularly review the power map as the initiative progresses and stakeholder dynamics evolve.

Sample Partner Mapping Activities:

This activity aims to help identify, analyze, and strategically engage key stakeholders who influence a public health initiative. Below is a simple activity guide for you to use as a guide for your partner mapping.

Part 1:

- Discuss how understanding stakeholders' influence and interest can guide engagement strategies.
- Ask your team to brainstorm and list all possible stakeholders related to the public health issue (e.g., government agencies, community leaders, NGOs, healthcare providers, media, and affected populations).
- Write each stakeholder on a separate sticky note or card.
- Draw a large grid with two axes:
 - X-axis: Level of Interest (Low to High)
 - Y-axis: Level of Influence/Power (Low to High)

Discuss and prioritize outreach:

- Which stakeholders have the most power and interest?
- Which stakeholders are potential allies or opponents?
- Are there stakeholders who are influential but not interested, or vice versa?



Part 2:

For each quadrant of the map, discuss and record strategies for engagement:

- High Influence, High Interest: Collaborate and involve closely.
- High Influence, Low Interest: Keep satisfied; find ways to increase their interest.
- Low Influence, High Interest: Keep informed and empower as advocates.
- Low Influence, Low Interest: Monitor with minimal effort.

Stakeholder	Influence (High/Med/Low)	Interest (High/Med/Low)	Key Relationships	Notes/Strategies
<i>Local Health Plan</i>	High	Medium	Providers, Health Dept.	Engage via data sharing
<i>School Superintendent</i>	High	High	Schools, Parents	Key partner for outreach
<i>Community Health Worker</i>	Medium	High	Families, Providers	Peer education support

Debrief:

- Ask participants to reflect on how the mapping exercise changed their perception of the stakeholder landscape.
- Discuss how these insights can inform communication and advocacy strategies in their public health work.

This activity helps teams visualize and prioritize stakeholder relationships, ensuring more effective and strategic interventions. After prioritizing your initial partner outreach, consider identifying and leveraging personal relationships within each organization to find your vaccine champion.

By creating a comprehensive stakeholder map and fostering strong relationships with these key players, you can build a plan of action and maintain support for your HPV vaccination improvement project. This network will be instrumental in overcoming barriers, addressing hesitancy, and ultimately increasing vaccination rates in your community.

Who is missing from your table?



Quick Tips for Partnerships and Collaboration

A key objective in stakeholder and power mapping is to identify the ‘right person’ within each healthcare center to serve as a vaccine champion. These individuals can be influential advocates within their organizations and the broader community. Training these champions—alongside physicians and CHWs—ensures consistency in messaging and maximizes the reach and effectiveness of vaccination efforts.

1. Local Coalitions or Initiatives:

- Identify whether there are existing local or statewide vaccine related coalitions before embarking on coalition development. Your health department may want to consider an initiative-based approach, like Genesee County, if there are existing groups with a broader focus.
- Collaborate with cancer prevention organizations to leverage their expertise and resources.
- Identify early what stakeholders you want to have at the table, and remember that your enthusiasm may not always translate to other organizations’ engagement!

Looking for tips on partnership and coalition building? Check out this guide:

[PHCC: How to Build Cross-Sector Partnerships that Improve Public Health](#)

2. Engagement with Payors and Health Plans:

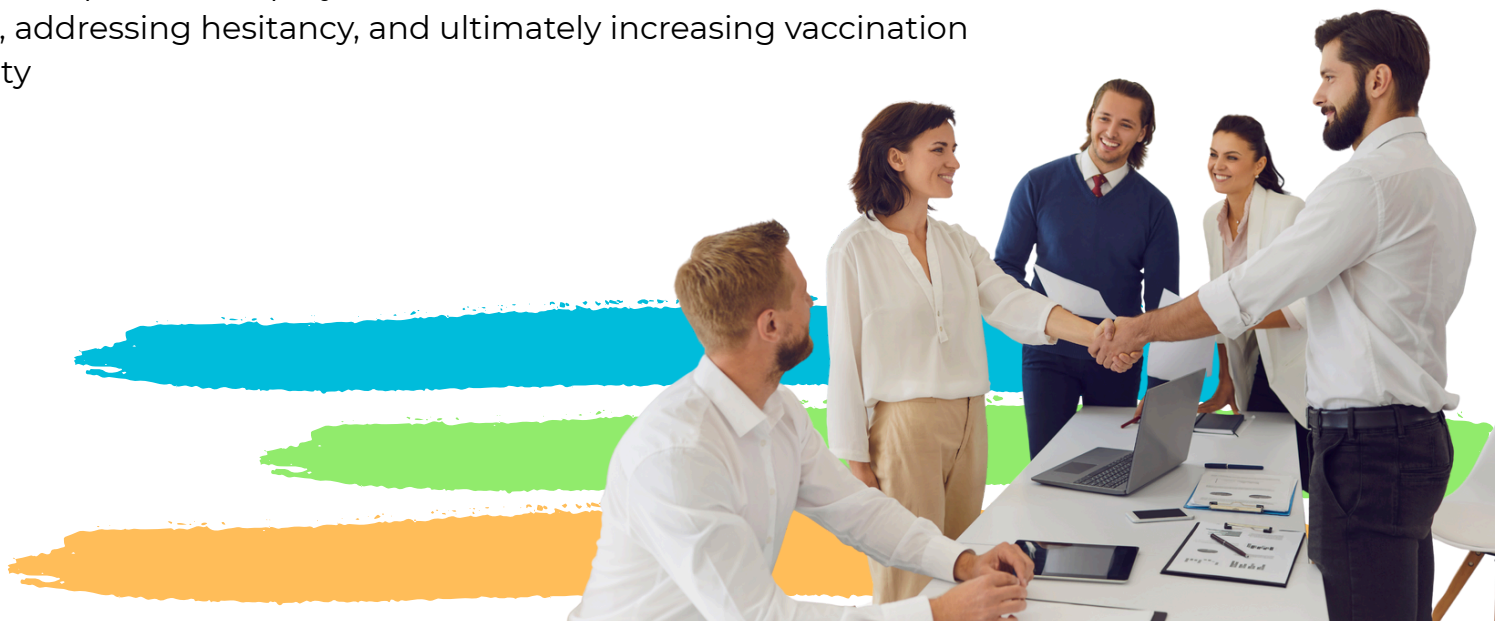
- Establish relationships with medical directors, quality improvement leads, and population health managers.
- Align with quality measures: Help health plans improve HEDIS measures related to adolescent vaccination.
- Promote value-based care by encouraging payors to adopt payment models that incentivize high vaccination rates.
- Support provider networks by providing training and resources to health plan provider networks.
- Develop data sharing agreements: Facilitate secure data exchange and coordinated outreach.
- Joint initiatives: Propose joint public awareness campaigns, targeted reminders/recalls, and community vaccination events.

3. Academic and Research Partnerships:

- Partner with local universities for research, training, and evaluation support.
 - Read about Iowa’s training activities here: [Training Health Care Providers to Promote HPV Vaccination](#).
- Collaborate with university students to develop and test a curriculum for training healthcare practitioners and CHWs. This provides students with research opportunities and strengthens the HPV vaccination initiative.

Building and Sustaining the Network

By creating a comprehensive stakeholder map and fostering strong relationships with these key players, you can build a robust plan of action and maintain support for your HPV vaccination improvement project. This network will be instrumental in overcoming barriers, addressing hesitancy, and ultimately increasing vaccination rates in your community



Provider Engagement

Healthcare providers play a pivotal role in improving HPV vaccination rates. Their recommendations and communication strategies can significantly influence parents' and patients' decisions to initiate and complete the HPV vaccine series. By engaging and educating providers, your team supports an essential component of any successful vaccination project. Parents who receive a strong provider recommendation are 10 times more likely to initiate the HPV vaccination series for their children (Ellingson et al., 2023).

- **Healthcare Provider Training:** Equipping providers with the latest knowledge and effective communication strategies is essential. By organizing targeted workshops and offering incentives such as CME credits, we can ensure that providers are well-prepared to address HPV vaccination with their patients.
- **Quality Improvement (QI) Teams:** Implementing systematic approaches to improve vaccination rates within healthcare practices can lead to substantial gains. QI teams can help identify barriers, implement solutions, and monitor progress over time. They are often the gatekeepers to reaching physicians who are employed by a health system.
- **Communication Tools:** Providing healthcare providers with ready-to-use, evidence-based communication tools can streamline their efforts to educate patients and parents about HPV vaccination.

Physicians are often required to attend training or staff meetings provided by their quality improvement teams. Training opportunities include recall strategies, vaccine epidemiology and safety, and best practices in vaccine communication. With the increase in vaccine hesitancy, providers may be excited and willing to invest effort into improving their practice's vaccine rates.

Healthcare Provider Training

Equipping providers with the latest knowledge and effective communication strategies is essential. Training should cover:

- Vaccine epidemiology and safety
- Best practices in vaccine communication
- Effective recall strategies
- Addressing vaccine hesitancy

A strong provider recommendation is the most influential factor in an individual's decision to get vaccinated. To leverage this influence, it's important to equip our healthcare providers with the necessary knowledge and skills. Organizing workshops can significantly enhance providers' ability to make strong, impactful recommendations. Offering CME-accredited sessions serves as an incentive for participation, ensuring widespread engagement. Implementing the "Announce Approach" training for providers can further improve their communication effectiveness. This approach, which involves presenting vaccination as a routine and expected part of care, has been shown to increase vaccination rates. By focusing on these key areas of provider education and engagement, healthcare systems can significantly boost their HPV vaccination rates and, consequently, improve public health outcomes.

If you are looking to provide training on vaccine hesitancy and language, here is an example you can edit with a focus on language and vaccine hesitancy communication training:

**Example of Provider Education Presentation
on Vaccine Hesitancy**

The Announce Approach

The “Announce Approach” is a concise way to provide a strong recommendation. The announce approach is an effective strategy to improve vaccine rates, particularly for human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination. This method involves healthcare providers using brief, presumptive statements that assume parents are ready to vaccinate their children (Brewer et al., 2017).

Here are some key pieces to use in training for providers:

Presumptive Language: Encourage providers to use brief statements in place of open-ended questions and use language that assumes parents are prepared to vaccinate, which can help normalize the vaccination process. Research suggests that the announce approach refusals were at 26% vs. participatory refusals at nearly 83% (Anderson et al., 2014).

Here are some effective examples of such language:

- **For Children Aged 9-10:**
 - “Alex is now 9, so today they’ll get a vaccine that prevents six HPV cancers.”
 - “Since your child is 9, they’re due for their HPV vaccine today.”
- **For Children Aged 11-12:**
 - “Now that Jasmine is 11, she is due for three vaccines. Today, she’ll get vaccines against meningitis, HPV cancers, and whooping cough.”
 - “It’s time for your child’s routine vaccinations, including the HPV vaccine, which protects against several cancers.”
- **General Statements:**
 - “Your son is due for his vaccines today; we will give him (state the vaccines they are due for) before you leave.”

This approach may not be effective with patients who adamantly refuse vaccinations. However, if the patient has previously accepted some vaccines or the provider has a strong relationship with the patient, this approach has the potential to be very effective. Presumptive language is important to convey confidence in their medical recommendations. It is essential for providers to remain responsive to parental concerns and to adapt their approach as needed to foster a collaborative environment. This balance is crucial for effective communication and improving vaccination rates among children.

Vaccine Hesitancy: Dos and Don’ts for Healthcare Providers



Dos

- Use metaphors that work:
 - **Literacy:** Teaching your body how to identify illnesses is like teaching your brain how to read!
 - **Computer Update:** We update our phones and laptops in the same way we have to update our own software.
- Sandwich the conversation! **Start and end with facts.**
 - Fact, empathize, affirm, finish with the fact.
 - Sandwich **‘new’ vaccines in the middle of the ‘old’ vaccines.** “Today we are getting our Tdap, HPV, and MenACWY”
- Be open to listening, and follow-up with **alternative resources.**
 - Voices for Vaccines
 - IVaccinate
- **Be Positive!** This is a hard conversation for vaccine-hesitant individuals. Approach the conversation as a learning opportunity.



Don’ts

- Don’t use metaphors that imply invincibility:
 - Army, soldiers, and shields are out.
- Don’t make the conversation about **protecting others.** The benefit to the community is well understood, but this doesn’t address personal health concerns.
- Don’t **focus on misinformation:** Many people place great confidence in their own research and personal experiences, often believing their information and sources to be trustworthy and reliable.
- Don’t use language like **‘healthy is better than sick.’**
 - This doesn’t address fear of significant side effects and effectiveness of the vaccine.
- Don’t diminish the **fear of side effects.** Acknowledge the possible side effects and remind them of the benefits (The fact sandwich!)

Quality Improvement Teams

Quality improvement (QI) teams play a crucial role in enhancing healthcare delivery and patient outcomes within a healthcare system. These teams are designed to identify, implement, and monitor improvements in various aspects of healthcare services.

They play a vital role in fostering a culture of continuous improvement within healthcare organizations. By regularly reviewing data, identifying opportunities for enhancement, and implementing targeted interventions, these teams help create an environment where quality improvement becomes an ongoing process rather than a one-time effort (Tulane University, 2024). These teams can assist in supporting the dissemination of training activities, educational tools, and more!

When reaching out to QI teams within local healthcare systems, keep these strategies in mind:

- Provide autonomy to QI teams to define their improvement initiatives, as this approach tends to increase engagement and ownership (Carstensen et al., 2024). When engaging with these teams, ask them where they are hoping to focus their improvement efforts within the next year and how your team can support them along the way.
- These teams cover a wide range of improvement measures. Familiarize your team with [Healthcare Effectiveness Data and Information Set \(HEDIS\)](#) measures. Your team may be able to provide support in more than one area.
- There may be internal QI staff in private practice, or the office manager may be responsible for monitoring HEDIS measures within their office. Not all primary care providers are affiliated with a larger care network and may require you to reach out to the physician directly.

Organizations that have Community Health Workers who work with Community Health Access Programs (CHAPs) often have connections to the local QI teams. They are tasked with outreach to patients identified by health plans to assist them in engaging with and accessing healthcare. For example, they will reach out to a family with a baby who has missed three well-baby visits to assess if they need assistance with transportation or other support to get them to an appointment. If you are unsure who to contact within a health plan or local healthcare team, see if there is a local healthcare access team, like CHAPs, that may be able to provide direct contact and connection!

Communication Tools

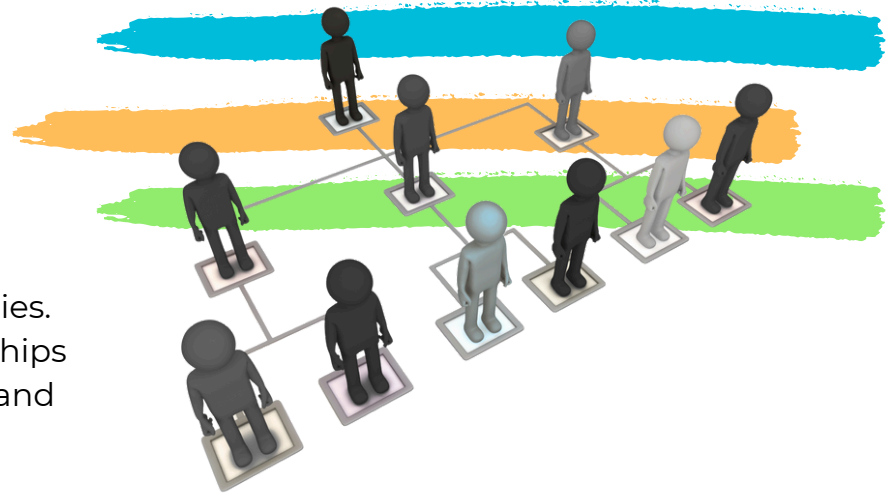
Whenever possible, encourage providers to give educational materials to patients, promote vaccination through in-office posters, and keep up to date on resources for vaccine information.

- Educational materials can either be electronic or paper prints. Keep in mind that these will need to be provided to the offices. Physicians likely do not have a printing budget for educational materials. A local health department can provide approved campaign materials and other printed resources to offices.
 - Local small grants are fabulous for this! Develop your campaign and reach out to local funders for mini-grants to support these efforts.
- When referring to vaccine resources that provide accurate information, promote them as 'alternative resources' to vaccine hesitant individuals. This prevents the patient from feeling as though the physician is dismissing their existing knowledge and understanding.
 - Alternative resources for vaccine information that they could promote are: [IVaccinate](#), [Voices for Vaccines](#), and [Immunize.org](#).



System-Level Interventions

In the quest to improve HPV vaccination rates, system-level interventions play a crucial role in creating a supportive infrastructure for healthcare providers, patients, and communities. These interventions leverage technology and strategic partnerships to streamline vaccination processes, enhance communication, and expand access to immunization services.



One system-level approach includes improving the use of reminder/recall systems. These tools, when effectively implemented, can significantly boost vaccination rates by ensuring timely follow-ups and creating a more efficient vaccination workflow. Alongside these technological solutions, expanding access through community partnerships further strengthens the reach and impact of vaccination efforts.

Let's explore how these interventions can be tailored to your county's unique needs and existing healthcare infrastructure, starting with the implementation of reminder/recall systems in provider offices.

Reminder/Recall Systems and Provider Offices

There is a wide range of systems, each with its own set of capabilities. Electronic Medical Record (EMR) and Electronic Health Record (EHR) systems vary significantly in their capabilities, features, and implementation options. While EMRs focus on digital record-keeping within a single practice, EHRs offer broader functionality with interoperability across healthcare settings (Tsai et al., 2020).

Each healthcare provider will need to evaluate their specific needs, existing infrastructure, and community requirements to determine which features will be most beneficial for their vaccination program. Some systems excel at patient engagement through integrated portals, while others might offer robust population health management tools or specialized clinical decision support (Luong, 2024).

During your initial outreach to healthcare providers and health systems, be sure to ask their teams to review their systems' capabilities. The key is to work closely with providers to identify which of the following suggested functionalities align with their goals, technical capabilities, and patient population needs. By understanding that there is no one-size-fits-all solution, health departments can better guide providers in selecting and implementing features that will enhance their vaccination efforts while integrating smoothly with their existing workflows. We want this to be as easy for providers as possible!

The Role of Immunization Information Systems (IIS)

It is important to recognize the potential of using your state or regional Immunization Information System (IIS) as an option for reminder and recall efforts. Many IIS offer built-in reminder/recall functionalities that can help providers identify patients who are due or overdue for vaccinations. However, each state's IIS may be configured to prompt providers to initiate HPV vaccination at different ages, often aligned with CDC recommendations (typically ages 11–12, but some states may prompt 'recommended' at age 9).

Advocating for HPV Vaccination Initiation at Age 9:

[American Academy of Pediatrics \(AAP\)](#) and leading health organizations now recommend initiating HPV vaccination as early as age 9, with evidence showing that starting at this age can improve vaccine uptake and completion rates.

- Encourage providers to configure their clinical workflows and reminder systems—including EMR/EHR platforms—to prompt HPV vaccination at age 9, rather than waiting until ages 11–12.
- Advocate when possible for your state's IIS to prompt 'Due' at age 9 to reflect the recommendations of the AAP.

Quick Tips for Primary Care System Upgrades

The following suggestions and changes to workflow can be adapted to kit a variety of systems:

- Establish updated protocols for the timing of reminders: before the due date (reminders) and after missed appointments (recalls) to be prompted at age 9.
 - Configure automated systems to send messages via phone, text, email, or mail based on patient preferences. See reminder/recall messaging options for texting below.
 - Tailor the language to meet communication best practices! Use the Announce Approach and provide a message directly from the physician if possible.
- Add questions to office intake forms about human papillomavirus and other vaccine awareness-based questions.
 - Questions could include:
 - Have you ever heard of human papillomavirus (HPV)?
 - Are you aware that HPV can cause certain types of cancer?
 - Do you know how HPV is transmitted?
 - Are you familiar with the HPV vaccine?
 - Have you or your child(ren) received the HPV vaccine?
 - Have you received all recommended vaccines for your age group?
 - Do you have any concerns about vaccine safety?
 - Are you aware of the diseases that vaccines can prevent?
 - Do you know where to find reliable information about vaccines?
 - Have you ever declined a recommended vaccine? If yes, why?

Sample HPV Vaccine Reminder Text Messages (1st Dose)

(Focused on Parents/Guardians)

- "Your child is due for their first HPV vaccine, which helps prevent several types of cancer. Schedule their appointment with [Clinic] today."
- "It's time for your child's HPV vaccine! This vaccine protects against cancers caused by HPV. Call [Clinic Phone] or reply to book their first dose."
- "Protect your child's future: the HPV vaccine is recommended now to prevent HPV-related cancers. Contact [Clinic] to schedule their first dose."
- "Your child is now eligible for the HPV vaccine, an important step in cancer prevention. Book their first dose with [Clinic] at your earliest convenience."

Sample HPV Vaccine Reminder Text Messages (2nd Dose)

Below are sample messages you can share with doctors for use in automated recall systems:

For Parents/Guardians

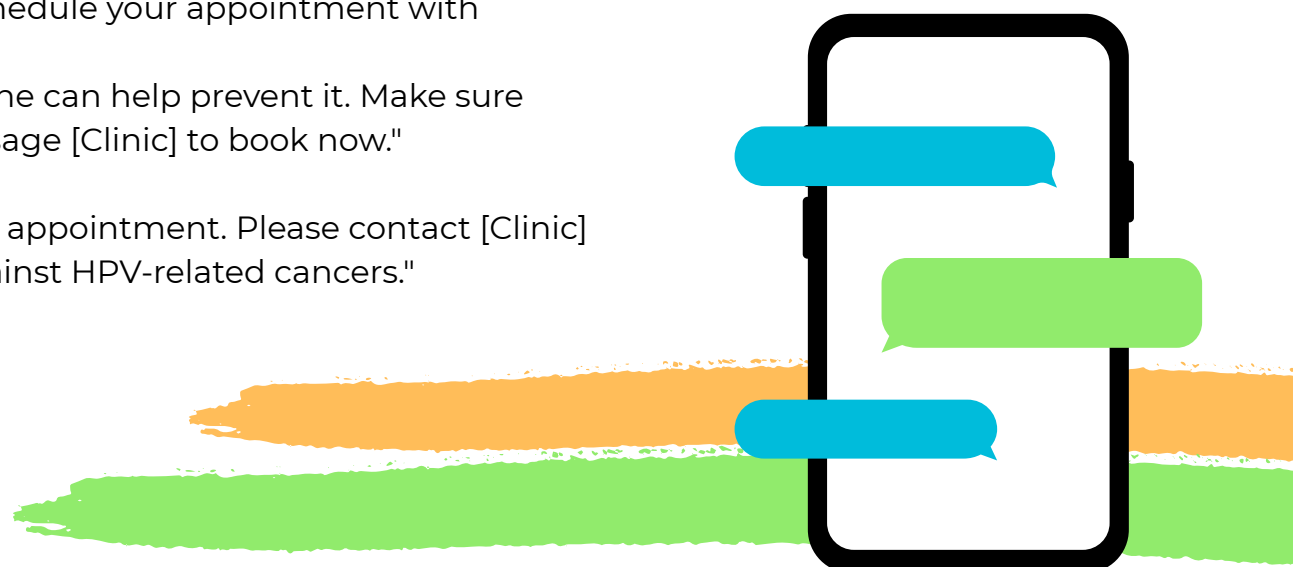
- "This is Dr. [Name] from [Clinic]. Your child is due for their next HPV vaccine dose, which helps prevent cancer. Please call us at [Clinic Phone] or schedule online to book your appointment."
- "HPV vaccine = cancer prevention! [Clinic] recommends your child's next dose is due. Please book an appointment at your earliest convenience."

For Adolescents/Young Adults

- "Hi [Name], you're due for your next HPV vaccine dose. This vaccine helps protect you from certain cancers. Schedule your appointment with [Clinic] today!"
- "HPV can cause cancer, but the vaccine can help prevent it. Make sure you get your next dose—call or message [Clinic] to book now."

For Missed Appointments

- "We noticed you missed your vaccine appointment. Please contact [Clinic] to reschedule and stay protected against HPV-related cancers."



School-Based Programs

Before reaching out to schools for vaccination initiatives, health departments should consider several key points. The school environment is a trusted community hub with valuable resources, such as school nurses, and some schools even have school-based clinics. Establishing strong partnerships with school districts and involving them in planning efforts ensures aligned goals and community-specific insights.

Health departments can enhance their relationships with schools by moving beyond their traditional regulatory role. While vaccine compliance and record-keeping are essential functions, departments can foster more positive partnerships by diversifying their engagement strategies. Utilizing health educators and community health workers to build connections allows for a more holistic approach to school health. These staff members can emphasize the supportive functions of the health department, such as providing resources and expertise for health initiatives. This approach not only helps alleviate potential tensions arising from regulatory interactions but also creates opportunities for comprehensive support in areas like communicable disease management and community healthcare connections.

Focusing on clear communication through various channels and working with trusted school leaders helps build vaccine confidence. It's essential to address equity and access by using data to identify disparities and tailoring efforts to community needs. Finally, health departments should be prepared to offer comprehensive support, including expertise in health education, assistance with immunizations and health screenings, and help in navigating logistical challenges. By keeping these factors in mind, health departments can create more effective school-based vaccination programs and improve overall community health.

Approaching Schools: Practical Guidance

When reaching out to schools, begin with the school nurse, the district's Director of Health and Medical Services, or a similar district-level health coordinator. Your outreach should include:

- **Introduction:** Briefly introduce yourself and your role.
- **Purpose:** Clearly state your goal—to establish a partnership for improving student vaccination rates.
- **Proposed Initiative:** Outline your vaccination program (e.g., "Vaccinate Before You Graduate").
- **Benefits:** Highlight benefits for students, the school, and the community, such as improved health outcomes and reduced absenteeism.
- **Collaboration Opportunity:** Express your desire to collaborate and leverage the school's expertise in planning and implementation.
- **Initial Meeting Request:** Request a meeting to discuss the potential partnership and program details.

Building Effective Partnerships with Schools

Before reaching out to schools for vaccination initiatives, health departments should consider several key points:

- **Recognize Schools as Community Hubs:** Schools are trusted environments with valuable resources, including school nurses and, in some cases, on-site clinics.
- **Move Beyond Regulatory Roles:** While vaccine compliance and record-keeping are essential, health departments can foster more positive partnerships by diversifying engagement strategies. Utilizing health educators and community health workers helps build connections and emphasizes the department's supportive functions, such as providing resources and expertise for health initiatives. This approach can alleviate potential tensions from regulatory interactions and open opportunities for collaboration in communicable disease management and healthcare connections.
- **Establish Strong Partnerships:** Involve school districts early in planning efforts to ensure aligned goals and gain community-specific insights.



Communication and Engagement:

- **Use Multiple Communication Channels:** Clear communication is vital. Leverage various school-based channels, such as newsletters, school websites, parent-teacher association meetings, school social media accounts, direct emails to parents, and announcements at school events.
- **Work with Trusted Leaders:** Collaborate with school administrators, principals, and especially school nurses, as they are trusted figures who can help build vaccine confidence.
- **Focus on Equity and Access:** Use data to identify disparities and tailor efforts to the unique needs of each community.

Health departments should be prepared to offer comprehensive support:

- Expertise in health education
- Assistance with immunizations and health screenings
- Support in navigating logistical challenges

By integrating these elements, health departments can create more effective school-based vaccination programs and enhance overall community health.

Tailoring Activities to Community Needs:

These activities should be adapted to fit the specific needs and resources of your school community. Focus on:

- Education, outreach, and collaboration
- Assessing both the health department and school capacity before implementation
- Starting with high-impact, low-resource strategies and expanding as capacity allows
- Prioritizing interventions that align with your community's specific needs and cultural context to maximize effectiveness and sustainability

Based on the successful strategies shared by local health departments, here are some activities you could propose to a school stakeholder to increase HPV vaccination rates:

- **Engage School Nurses as Advocates:** Focus on educational materials and outreach for parents, using school nurses as trusted messengers.
- **Collaborate with Students:** Work with high school students to create informational videos about HPV and other adolescent vaccines, to be shown in schools and clinics.
- **Implement Peer Health Advocate Programs:** Involve local teens in developing and delivering HPV prevention messages to their peers.
- **Conduct Parent Focus Groups:** Gather insights from parents about their concerns and address them in specific educational campaigns.
- **Establish a School-Based HPV Prevention Workgroup:** Create subgroups to focus on education, messaging, and data enhancement.
- **Host Educational Events:** Provide sessions for school staff and first responders to raise awareness about HPV vaccination.
- **Develop Culturally Appropriate Outreach:** Work with local women's groups or parent organizations to promote HPV vaccination among young mothers still eligible for the vaccine. Schools can facilitate connections with these groups and help distribute tailored materials.
- **Integrate HPV with Other Vaccine Recommendations:** Group HPV vaccine recommendations with other adolescent vaccines during school health checks or immunization clinics to streamline the process for families.





These activities can be tailored to fit the specific needs and resources of your school community, focusing on education, outreach, and collaboration to improve HPV vaccination rates. Remember to assess both the health department's and the school's capacity when selecting and implementing these activities. Start with high-impact, low-resource strategies and gradually expand as capacity allows. Prioritize interventions that align with your community's specific needs and cultural context to maximize effectiveness and sustainability.

Acknowledging that not all providers have vaccines in their offices, not all schools have clinics, and not everyone is eligible for free vaccines through the Vaccines for Children program, we must work to improve access too!

To truly expand access and reach a broader population, it's essential to look beyond traditional healthcare settings. As we transition to our next topic, we'll explore how establishing vaccine clinics in diverse community locations and partnering with non-traditional healthcare providers can significantly enhance vaccination efforts.

Integrated Health Care Facilities & Dental Teams

FQHCs and integrated medical centers play a crucial role in improving community health and increasing vaccination rates, particularly for HPV. Further integrating dental and medical services, FQHCs can leverage dental appointments as an opportunity to identify and vaccinate eligible patients. By offering on-site vaccinations or direct referrals to an affiliated medical provider, FQHCs can significantly reduce barriers to vaccination, such as the need for separate appointments or visits to different facilities.

Approximately 70% of all head, neck, and throat cancers are attributable to HPV (Roman & Aragonés, 2021). Dental teams maintain trusted relationships with their patients and are uniquely positioned to serve as effective messengers for oral cancer prevention. Through frequent patient interactions, dental professionals have valuable opportunities to educate individuals and families about the connection between HPV and oral cancers.

Key Strategies for Integrating HPV Vaccination in FQHCs

- **Leverage Dental Visits for Vaccine Assessment and Referral**
 - Train dental staff to review immunization status for adolescent patients using available registries or electronic health records.
 - Document HPV vaccine eligibility in the dental chart and flag eligible patients.
 - Provide HPV educational materials with dental paperwork and display educational content in waiting areas.
 - Encourage dental providers (dentists, hygienists, assistants) to discuss the importance of HPV vaccination with patients and caregivers during visits.
- **Streamline On-Site Vaccination or Direct Referrals**
 - If the patient is eligible and interested, escort them to the on-site primary care clinic for same-day vaccination.
 - For patients not established with the FQHC's primary care, offer immediate vaccination if possible, or provide clear instructions and educational materials for follow-up at their provider, local health department, or pharmacy.
 - Ensure all vaccine administrations are promptly documented in the appropriate immunization registry.
- **Foster Interdepartmental Collaboration**
 - Establish workflows that facilitate communication between dental and medical teams, such as using color-coded cards or electronic alerts to indicate vaccine eligibility.
 - Regularly review and refine processes based on feedback from staff and patients to ensure efficiency and effectiveness.

Streamlined Steps for Engaging Effectively with an FQHC

- **Initiate Contact:** Introduce your organization to FQHC leadership and express interest in collaborating on HPV vaccination.
- **Learn Their Services:** Understand and learn about the FQHC's programs and services, including primary care, dental, and behavioral health.
- **Align on Goals:** Identify shared priorities, such as boosting vaccination rates and reducing health disparities.
- **Propose Joint Initiatives:** Suggest projects like integrated dental-medical vaccination programs.
- **Provide Support:** Offer educational materials and training to staff on HPV and adolescent immunizations.
- **Integrate Care:** Develop care models that combine dental and medical services for seamless vaccination.
- **Customize Workflows:** Work together to create processes tailored to the FQHC's operations and patients.
- **Drive Quality Improvement:** Join efforts to monitor progress, address challenges, and share best practices.
- **Maintain Communication:** Keep open, regular contact to support ongoing collaboration and continuous improvement.

Drafted Integrated Dental Team Workflow

Fill-in-the-Blank Workflow Template: Integrated Health Center HPV Vaccination at Dental Visits
Proposed Workflow for referrals for HPV Vaccination

1. **Pre-Visit Assessment:** [Job Title/Role] assesses HPV gaps in care for vaccine prior to visit (e.g., reviews [Immunization Registry] for patients ages 9 - 18 and determines if a dose may be needed).
2. **Documentation:** Record immunization status in [Dental Charting System].
3. **Identifying Gaps:** If a gap is noted, alert the Dental team that the patient is due for HPV vaccine by handing the team member a [Identifier] card (that the team recognizes as indicating HPV vaccine eligibility).
4. **Educational Materials:** Include HPV education with dental paperwork (e.g., HPV brochure).
5. **Waiting Room Education:** Display HPV education on [Waiting Room TV System] on rotation (Locations/Floors).
6. **Provider Education During Visit:** [Dentist/Hygienist/Dental Assistant/Other] provides education during the visit regarding the need for HPV vaccine if indicated by [Card/Signal/Identifier].
7. **Discussing Vaccination with Parent/Caregiver:** During hygiene visit, [Hygienist/Dental Assistant/Other] tells parent/caregiver that the patient is eligible for HPV vaccination and asks if they are interested.
 - **Sample Script:**
 - “We see [Patient Name] is eligible to receive the HPV vaccination, which helps reduce the risk of oral and other cancers. We are now recommending the vaccine to all eligible dental patients—same day, to save you a trip to the doctor. We can take you to our [Primary Care Clinic Name] and get that done before you leave today if that is alright with you. If you aren’t a patient of record here, you can still get it today, or you can visit your primary care physician, the health department, or most pharmacies.”
- **If Parent/Caregiver Agrees:**
 - At the end of the dental appointment, escort the patient and caregivers to [Primary Care Clinic Name] Front Desk with [Slip/Referral Form].
 - At [Primary Care Clinic Name]:
 - [Job Title/Role] notifies [Medical Assistant/Other].
 - [Primary Care Provider/Other] orders vaccine via standing orders.
 - Caregiver completes appropriate paperwork (distributed by [Job Title/Role]).
 - Vaccine administered by [MA/Physician/NP/Other].
 - [Immunization Registry] updated per existing/standard procedures.
- **If Parent/Caregiver Declines:**
 - If the patient is a record-holder at [Clinic Name], offer to have [Job Title/Role] work with [Primary Care CSR/Other] to schedule the next visit or a special vaccine appointment. Provide additional take-away HPV education materials (e.g., pamphlets).
 - If not a patient of record, provide take-away HPV education materials.
8. **Documentation of Education**
 - Include documentation of HPV education in [Dental Record System].

By taking these steps, you can build a strong partnership with an FQHC, leveraging each other's strengths to improve community health outcomes and expand access to quality healthcare services. The goal is to build intentional, sustainable relationships with all of our partners. Utilize this as a guide. If you find your perfect contact at the organization quickly, just be sure to remember that each institution has its own red tape, and an MOU is going to help bring that to light quickly!

Next, let's move to the community at large – how can we reach them directly?



Communications Campaigns

Public Awareness Campaigns

Communication campaigns are the icing on top of public health initiatives, serving as a crucial puzzle piece needed for disseminating information and catalyzing behavioral change across populations! These campaigns play an indispensable role in advancing health promotion, disease prevention, and overall well-being by bridging the gap between scientific knowledge and public action (Ntonjira, 2023)



You can build your messaging based on community feedback after facilitating focus groups or interviews, of course. However, not all teams have the capacity to facilitate such a project! Luckily, organizations like the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), FrameWorks Institute, and The Public Health Communications Collaborative (PHCC) have done work to identify effective messaging.

Check out the toolkits and messaging suggestions laid out by these organizations:

- [American Academy of Pediatrics: Video Commercial Promoting Vaccination as a software update](#)
- [FrameWorks Institute: Boosting Public Discourse: Reframing Childhood Immunization](#)
- [Public Health Communications Collaborative: Resources for Effective Messaging and Social Media Guidance](#)

Let's Get Started

To build an effective vaccination awareness campaign, start by defining clear objectives and understanding the demographics and concerns of our target audience. These can be concerns identified by your community specifically or by utilizing existing literature, such as those linked above, to narrow down the focus of the message.

Develop key messages that address common misconceptions and emphasize the benefits of vaccination. Plan to utilize a mix of communication channels, including social media, local healthcare providers, and community events, to reach your target audience effectively. Be sure to keep the messaging in plain, simple language with a clear call to action! You can use the Plain Language for Public Health Checklist to ensure that your message meets people's needs.

[PHCC: Plain Language for Public Health Checklist](#)

Create compelling, factual content such as infographics, personal stories, and easy-to-understand vaccine information. When designing content, it is vital to follow the Americans with Disability Act accessibility guidelines. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) in 2022 reported that 1 in 4 people have a disability in the United States (Centers for Disease Control, n.d.). Disability impacts each individual differently, and developing content means keeping individuals with dyslexia, color blindness, and visual impairments in mind.

Follow these guidelines for typography and keep this tool handy for referencing:

[U.S. General Services Administration: Understanding Accessible Fonts and Typography for Section 508 Compliance](#)

Collaborate with local partners, including healthcare professionals, community leaders, and schools, to amplify your message and increase credibility.

Launch your campaign strategically, perhaps aligning it with key community events like back-to-school or flu season, and implement practical initiatives, like mobile vaccination clinics.

Continuously measure and evaluate the impact of your campaign on vaccination rates and public attitudes, using this data to refine your approach. Remember to tailor your messaging to address specific community needs and concerns, and always provide clear, actionable information on how and where to get vaccinated.

Practical Tips for Your Vaccination Campaign

1. Use Clear, Evidence-Based, and Cancer Prevention Messaging

- a. Emphasize cancer prevention rather than sexual transmission. Frame the HPV vaccine as a way to prevent multiple types of cancer, not as a vaccine for a sexually transmitted infection.

2. Choose the Right Messengers

- a. Trusted healthcare providers (doctors, nurses, school nurses) are highly effective messengers for vaccine information.
- b. Community leaders (faith leaders, PTA members, local public figures) can help reach audiences who may distrust outside authorities.
- c. Peers and parents: Parent-to-parent and peer-to-peer stories can be especially persuasive. Adolescents are often influenced by friends who have received the vaccine, and parents value hearing from other parents who chose vaccination.

3. Use Storytelling and Personal Narratives

- a. Share personal stories from cancer survivors, parents, and young people who have been vaccinated. These narratives humanize the risks of HPV and the benefits of vaccination, making the message more relatable and memorable.
- b. Highlight parents' moral responsibility to protect their children from cancer, appealing to their sense of duty and care.

4. Tailor and Target Your Messaging

- a. Adjust language and visuals to be culturally relevant and appropriate for your target audience. Use champions from within specific cultural, religious, or community groups to deliver messages.
- b. Ensure materials are accessible, using low-literacy language and providing content in multiple languages as needed.

5. Normalize and Routinize the HPV Vaccine

- a. Present HPV vaccination as a standard part of adolescent immunizations, not as an optional or special vaccine. This helps reduce stigma and hesitancy.
- b. Include HPV vaccine information alongside other routine back-to-school vaccine reminders.

6. Communicate Across Multiple Media Platforms

- a. Use a mix of traditional media (TV, radio, print) and digital platforms (YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok) to reach diverse audiences.
- b. Incorporate educational content into unrelated community events, such as health fairs or farmers' markets, to reach people who might not seek out vaccine information directly.

7. Collaborate with Experts

- a. Consult with public health, marketing, and social media professionals to craft clear, impactful messages and determine optimal posting frequency and timing.
- b. Use guidance from organizations like the World Health Organization and the American Academy of Pediatrics to ensure message consistency and credibility.

By tailoring these strategies to focus on vaccinations, local health departments can create targeted, effective campaigns to increase vaccination rates and protect their communities. Always remember to provide accurate, up-to-date information and be prepared to address concerns compassionately and factually.

Looking for examples of media campaigns? Want to see how others are successfully launching their campaigns? Check out the PHCC's Spotlights. From Nevada to North Carolina, public health communicators are combatting misinformation through effective media!

[PHCC: Campaign Spotlights for 2023](#)



Time to Get to Work Empowering Communities Through Collaborative HPV Vaccination Efforts

As we conclude this comprehensive HPV Vaccination Improvement Toolkit, it's essential to reflect on the multifaceted approach required to increase vaccination rates and protect our communities from HPV-related cancers. The strategies and resources presented in this toolkit offer a roadmap for county health departments to create impactful and sustainable vaccination programs.

Key Takeaways:

- **Assessment and Planning:** A thorough evaluation of resources and local context is crucial for developing effective initiatives.
- **Data-Driven Approach:** Collecting and analyzing baseline data provides a foundation for targeted interventions and progress tracking.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Building a network of diverse partners amplifies efforts and ensures community-wide support.
- **Provider Education:** Equipping healthcare providers with the knowledge and communication tools necessary to increase vaccination rates is vital.
- **System-Level Interventions:** Implementing reminder/recall systems, as well as optimizing provider offices, can significantly improve vaccination workflows.
- **Community Outreach:** Expanding access through school-based programs and partnerships with integrated healthcare facilities reaches broader populations.
- **Public Awareness:** Developing targeted communication campaigns helps address misconceptions and promote vaccination benefits.

The success of HPV vaccination programs relies on the collective effort of health departments, healthcare providers, schools, community organizations, and the public. By leveraging the strategies outlined in this toolkit, county health departments can create tailored approaches that resonate with their unique communities.

As you implement these strategies, remember that flexibility and continuous improvement are key. Monitor your progress, adapt your approach based on lessons learned, and celebrate the successes along the way. Every increase in vaccination rates represents lives protected from HPV-related cancers. The journey to improve HPV vaccination rates may be challenging, but the potential impact on public health is immeasurable. By working together and utilizing the resources provided in this toolkit, we can make significant strides in protecting our communities from HPV-related cancers and creating a healthier future for all.



Note From The Author

This is just the beginning! As you gain experience and insights, share your successes and challenges with other health departments. Together, we can build a network of knowledge and best practices that will continue to advance HPV vaccination efforts across the nation.

Thank you for your dedication to this crucial public health initiative. Your efforts today will save lives tomorrow. Let's move forward with determination, creativity, and compassion to create a future where HPV-related cancers are a thing of the past.

If you have questions or would like access to our other developed materials or share feedback on this toolkit, send an email to ljohnson@geneseecountymi.gov. We are happy to provide continued support or assist in the work plan development and review process.

The QR Code will take you to a form that will allow you to provide direct feedback to our team. Your work and lessons learned can be shared back with others who have also engaged with this toolkit.

Thank you for all you do to serve your community.

With enthusiasm for a cancer-free future,

Leah Johnson, MPH, CHES
Health Educator



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