

Special Bulletin

For professional providers

August 7, 2024

August is National Immunization Awareness Month

Communication Strategies for Overcoming Vaccine Reluctance

You're the medical expert. Patients value your knowledge and opinion. That's why it's imperative to emphasize the importance of routine vaccination for people of all ages.

In this age of internet misinformation, most patients are looking for reassurance from their provider that vaccines are safe and effective. A strong, clear recommendation is usually enough, but some may need more information. Listening to patient concerns and answering their questions will make them feel confident in choosing to receive a vaccine.

National Immunization Awareness Month (NIAM) — which is an annual observance held in August — is an excellent time for not only communicating the importance of routine vaccinations, but also reviewing your practice's procedures for sharing and conveying vaccine information to patients and parents.

Practical Strategies for Successful Conversations

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) offers the following strategies providers can use during NIAM (and throughout the year) to help patients and parents to stay up to date on routine vaccinations:

- Talk to your patients and parents about any missed vaccines and assess vaccination status at every visit.
- Use plain language when addressing concerns about vaccine safety.
- Show your practice's support of vaccination throughout the month by displaying immunization schedules in office or on website.
- Practice the **SHARE** approach to help patients make informed decisions about vaccination.

What is the **SHARE** approach?

- **SHARE** the specific reasons why the recommended vaccine is right for the patient given his or her age, health status, lifestyle, occupation, or other risk factors.
- **HIGHLIGHT** positive experiences with vaccines (personal or in your practice), as appropriate, to reinforce the benefits and strengthen confidence in vaccination.
- **ADDRESS** patient questions and any concerns about the vaccine, including side effects, safety, and vaccine effectiveness in plain and understandable language.

- **REMIND** patients that vaccines protect them and their loved ones from many common and serious diseases.
- **EXPLAIN** the potential costs of getting the disease, including serious health effects, time lost (such as missing work or family obligations), and financial costs.

State Vaccination Requirements

State laws establish vaccination requirements for school children. These laws often apply to children attending not only public schools but also private schools and daycare facilities. States may also require immunization of health care workers and of patients/residents of health care facilities.

- [Public Health Law Program Vaccination Laws](#)
- [State Vaccination Requirements and Exemptions](#)

Additional Resources

On the Provider Resource Center (PRC), Highmark has a variety of **free** educational materials that emphasize the importance of vaccines and preventive health, including:

- Childhood Immunization Flyer
- Flu Flyer
- Health Screening and Vaccination Tracker
- HPV Information Flyer
- Preventive Health Reminder Poster

To access these resources, go to the PRC, select **EDUCATION/MANUALS** from the left menu, and then click **Educational Resources – Member And Provider**. To order free copies for your practice, go to the PRC > **EDUCATION/MANUALS** > **Inventory Request Form** > Select **Printable Item**. Click the down arrow and then select the items you wish to order. Complete the form and click the **ADD TO ORDER** button.

The following entities, which serve the noted regions, are independent licensees of the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association: Western and Northeastern PA: Highmark Inc. d/b/a Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield, Highmark Choice Company, Highmark Health Insurance Company, Highmark Coverage Advantage Inc., Highmark Benefits Group Inc., First Priority Health, First Priority Life or Highmark Senior Health Company. Central and Southeastern PA: Highmark Inc. d/b/a Highmark Blue Shield, Highmark Benefits Group Inc., Highmark Health Insurance Company, Highmark Choice Company, or Highmark Senior Health Company. Delaware: Highmark BCBSD Inc. d/b/a Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield. West Virginia: Highmark West Virginia Inc. d/b/a Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield, Highmark Health Insurance Company, or Highmark Senior Solutions Company. Western NY: Highmark Western and Northeastern New York Inc. d/b/a Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield. Northeastern NY: Highmark Western and Northeastern New York Inc. d/b/a Highmark Blue Shield.

All references to “Highmark” in this document are references to the Highmark company that is providing the member’s health benefits or health benefit administration and/or to one or more of its affiliated Blue companies.

