

## Pharmacists Can Administer Childhood Vaccines

Pharmacists in all 50 states can now administer childhood vaccines through a directive from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Alex Azar, the head of the HHS, used the Public Readiness and Emergency Preparedness Act to allow pharmacists to administer childhood vaccines. This mandate allows state-licensed pharmacists and registered pharmacy interns (directly supervised by an authorized pharmacist) who have completed an accredited immunization training program to administer necessary childhood vaccines to patients aged 3 to 18 years old without a prescription from a physician.<sup>1-4</sup> The Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE) is responsible for approving immunization training programs for pharmacists and pharmacy interns. The licensed/registered and immunization certified pharmacist and pharmacy intern must also have current CPR certification.<sup>1,3,4</sup>

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) does not approve of the decision made by the HHS and described it as “incredibly misguided”.<sup>3,4</sup> Their president, Dr. Sally Goza, said that pharmacies and pharmacists may not know the medical history of the child who requires vaccination<sup>4</sup> and that the AAP has trained medical professionals ready to talk with the families about their children’s vaccines as well as administer them.<sup>3,4</sup> She also commented that allowing pharmacists to administer childhood vaccines was unlikely to increase the rates of immunization.<sup>4</sup>

The HHS mandate preempts laws in 22 states that had previously limited pharmacists administering childhood vaccines, including three that had prohibited vaccinations altogether. The mandate came as a way to increase access to vaccines for children during the pandemic in hopes that it would decrease outbreaks of preventable diseases as kids return to schools and daycare.<sup>2-4</sup> Additionally, this mandate aims to prevent overall declines in vaccination rates. As noted by the CDC, there was a noticeable decline in childhood vaccinations at physicians’ offices in March and April.<sup>2</sup> The HHS has worked in conjunction with the American Pharmacists Association in expanding the services that pharmacists can provide during the pandemic. Improving access that children and their families have to vaccinations in an unprecedented time is a result of this collaboration and one that will hopefully help increase childhood vaccination rates while decreasing preventable disease outbreaks.<sup>2,4</sup>

### References:

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