

Pennsylvania Children's Access to Routine and Essential Shots (PA CARES) Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Version 1 - November 26, 2025

Provider Eligibility/Enrollment

Q: Will all VFC providers automatically be enrolled in PA CARES? If not, how will we know how to apply?

A: No, Vaccines for Children (VFC) providers will not be automatically enrolled in the PA CARES program. To enroll, providers must complete, sign, and submit the PA CARES Provider Agreement to the PA CARES resource account (RA) RA-DHPACARES@pa.gov.

Q: Which providers are eligible to enroll in PA CARES (All VFC Providers, Birthing Centers, SHCs)?

A: All VFC providers in good standing with VFC program requirements are eligible to and encouraged to enroll in PA CARES. Providers who are not currently enrolled in VFC may do so through the normal process and then may subsequently elect to enroll in PA CARES.

Q: For Pediatric Offices under a health system umbrella, does each office need to register for the PA CARES?

A: Each clinic with a distinct VFC Provider Identification Number (PIN) will need to enroll in PA CARES.

Q: If we see only school aged children, will this impact us, and should we register?

A: We encourage all VFC providers to enroll. If in the future, vaccines are removed from or schedules are altered for the VFC program, we anticipate that PA CARES will cover the vaccine(s), depending on availability of funding. If the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) immunization schedule changes, PA CARES will offer impacted vaccines in accordance with the [immunization schedules endorsed by the Pennsylvania Department of Health \(PA DOH\)](#): currently American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP), or American College

of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) in addition to those recommended by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Q: Will PA CARES enrollment be completed through PIERS?

A: No. Providers will receive the PA CARES Provider Agreement through emailed provider notice. Providers will complete, sign, and submit the Provider Agreement to the PA CARES RA email RA-DHPACARES@pa.gov. Please include site name and VFC PIN in the email subject line. (Philadelphia VFC providers will email their completed agreement to the Philadelphia Immunization Program at Vaccines@phila.gov.)

Q: Will enrollment information come to VFC coordinators AND back-ups?

A: Yes, enrollment information will be sent to both the Primary and Back-up Coordinators.

Q: What is the enrollment start date for this, and can you provide the link to enroll?

A: Enrollment is open now. The Pennsylvania Immunization Program (Program) will send out an emailed provider notice with an attached PA CARES Provider Agreement to enroll.

Ordering:

Q: Will we be able to order single doses of the vaccines from PA CARES vs ordering entire boxes?

A: Vaccine quantities for PA CARES will closely match VFC but will typically be multi-dose vials. Available products will be denoted in PIERS on the ordering screen.

Q: Will PA CARES only supplement what ACIP changes? Meaning, we will still need VFC and private stock as this does not replace VFC?

A: Yes, PA CARES will supplement the VFC program. Providers who serve private, VFC-eligible, and PA CARES-eligible patients will need to maintain a stock of privately purchased, VFC, and PA CARES inventory.

Q: Will the only PA CARES vaccines that will be available for providers to order, be those that are no longer recommended by ACIP? Will all the other vaccine have to be ordered through VFC?

A: Yes, PA CARES will only offer vaccines impacted by changes to ACIP recommendations. All vaccines offered through VFC will still need to be ordered through existing VFC methods. It is also possible that ACIP could allow shared clinical decision making for a modified schedule. In that instance, Program will provide guidance on how vaccines are covered moving forward.

Shipments:

Q: When do you anticipate that this program will start to ship? Will there be gaps in access?

A: We are working to get this program launched quickly to avoid gaps in access if/when changes are made to ACIP recommendations. To help avoid gaps in vaccine access, we encourage all VFC providers to enroll as quickly as possible.

ACIP Changes

Q: Once a vaccine is removed or changed by ACIP, how long will it take for DOH recommendations to be released?

A: [PA DOH already released immunization guidance](#) and endorsed the vaccine recommendations and schedules produced by trusted U.S. professional medical societies, including AAP, AAFP, and ACOG.

Q: When you say PA CARES is a safety net if the CDC changes things, do you know what exactly they are trying to change?

A: ACIP already changed the recommendations for COVID vaccines, and CDC adopted the new recommendations for VFC. Discussions of the Hepatitis B vaccine and schedule were postponed and are anticipated to be included in ACIP's meeting on

December 4-5, 2025. Additional guidance and direction from the Program will be released to our providers subsequent to the outcome of the December 2025 meeting.

Q: Are there any legal implications for providers that administer vaccines on AAP/AAFP/ACOG schedule rather than ACIP/CDC? (in the event that ACIP alters their schedule)

A: All VFC providers must continue to administer VFC vaccine in accordance with ACIP recommendations adopted by CDC for the VFC Program. VFC providers who enroll in PA CARES will be able to offer PA CARES vaccines in accordance with the [vaccine recommendations of PA DOH](#) that are based on AAP, AAFP, and ACOG. Health care providers can use clinical judgment to recommend what they believe is best for their patients.

ACIP Changes/Inventory

Q: If ACIP changes the recommendation for the birth dose, what will birthing hospitals do with the current VFC vaccine inventory at their site?

A: The Program can assist VFC providers to transfer VFC doses to another VFC provider who will be able to use them. This assistance is already available to VFC providers to help reduce vaccine waste.

Q: If ACIP bans combination vaccines which include hep B vaccines, what do we do with our remaining VFC combo hep B vaccines?

A: The Program anticipates that CDC would direct providers to return vaccines that are no longer recommended, similar to the handling of the previous season's COVID vaccine once the new formulations are authorized.

Q: If PA CARES supplies Hep B vaccine, will VFC supply combination vaccines which contain Hep B? If not, I guess only Pentacel will be supplied by VFC?

A: VFC will continue to offer all ACIP-recommended vaccines available on CDC's contract.

Q: How would we track inventory between VFC/317/Private/PA CARES in PIERS?

A: PIERS will have funding codes designated for PA CARES, VFC, 317, and Private. However, this may not be ready until a future enhancement. If the PA CARES funding code is not available in PIERS when PA CARES begins shipping, there will be an option to use “STATE” in the “Fund” field in PIERS. Providers are also asked to utilize the comments field indicate PA CARES intent when placing orders once PA CARES ordering begins. Further details on vaccine ordering and inventory management will be forthcoming from the Program.

Patient Eligibility:

Q: Which patients are eligible for PA CARES vaccines?

A: PA CARES has the same eligibility requirements as VFC.

Q: PA CARES doses are for VFC patients only correct?

A: Correct, PA CARES doses cannot be administered to patients with private or commercial insurance. PA CARES doses are for VFC-eligible patients. If VFC vaccine is available and the immunization schedule has not changed, VFC doses should be administered. If vaccines are removed from VFC or the immunization schedule changes, PA CARES doses should be administered to VFC-eligible patients in accordance with the recommendations and [schedule endorsed by PA DOH](#).

Q: Will this require a change in screening or documentation requirements?

A: VFC providers should continue to screen patients for VFC-eligibility at every immunization encounter and document both eligibility and eligibility category consistent with current procedure. PA CARES follows VFC-eligibility requirements.

Education for Parents:

Q: What kind of messaging will be given to parents if we give vaccines against ACIP recommendation?

A: The Pennsylvania and Philadelphia Immunization Programs will continue to reference Governor Shapiro’s [Executive Order 2025-02 – Protecting Pennsylvanians’ Health and Freedom by Ensuring Access to Safe and Effective Vaccines](#). PA DOH has released immunization guidance to the public and endorsed the vaccine recommendations and schedules of trusted U.S. professional medical societies, including AAP, AAFP, and ACOG.

Please Direct your PA CARES questions to:

Pennsylvania Immunization Program: RA-DHPA.CARES@PA.GOV

Philadelphia Immunization Program: VACCINES@PHILA.GOV