

## Michigan Creates New Ways to Promote Flu Vaccine to College Students and Young Adults

*Michigan Department of Community Health is working in new and innovative ways to increase flu vaccine use by college students and young adults.*

In Michigan and across the nation, less than one-third of young adults get vaccinated against flu.<sup>1</sup> Although flu vaccine is recommended for all persons six months and older, only 31.1 percent of U.S. 18-49 year olds were vaccinated in 2012-13, and in Michigan, this rate was even lower (26.2%).<sup>1</sup> Data from the Michigan Care Improvement Registry on young adults suggests that flu vaccine use by those aged 18-24 was also lower (9%).<sup>2</sup> Increasing flu vaccination rates among young adults has many benefits. Flu vaccination can reduce time lost from school or work, help women of childbearing age, engage young mothers who influence health decisions for family members, and protect students who live in dormitories where the virus can easily spread. Moving beyond an initial media and educational campaign, the Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH) immunization program continues to explore new avenues to target college students and young adults about vaccination. MDCH developed a college and university immunization toolkit, piloted a new grassroots competition within and among universities and colleges to increase vaccination rates, and expanded efforts beyond campuses to include nearby pharmacies and local health departments.

- Flu vaccination rates among young adults are low across the nation and in Michigan.
- Communication campaigns laid the groundwork for more extensive efforts to increase vaccination rates.
- Tapping into the fun of school rivalry, a flu vaccine competition among colleges and universities launched in 2014.

### Steps Taken:

- The Michigan [Flu Advisory Board](#), a committee initially developed in 2004-05 to assist with a vaccine shortage, meets regularly to share information updates with partners and shape future program efforts.
- The MDCH immunization program and advisory committee had been interested in reaching young populations with flu vaccine. Several deaths during the 2013-14 flu season of healthy, young adults due to flu highlighted the need for MDCH to re-emphasize the importance of reaching college students and young adults.
- Working with Michigan's Office of Public Health Preparedness, the immunization program began with a media campaign. MDCH used existing CDC messages that target young adults to help launch the campaign quickly, and put its focus on new channels for message delivery.
- MDCH aired advertisements on Spotify, an online music streaming website that is favored by Michigan college students. The advertisements included a [banner ad](#) (see "healthy young adults") and an [audio message](#) (see "I Never Get the Flu" radio PSA). In addition, MDCH also ran [television ads](#) ("Protect Yourself, Protect Your Family") statewide.
- MDCH compiled many of its flu materials into a single [flu gallery](#) on its website.
- In 2013, the immunization program worked with a network of colleges and universities and a local nonprofit organization, Alana's Foundation, to develop the [College and University Flu Vaccination Toolkit](#). This toolkit includes strategies to increase vaccination rates, flu vaccination infographics, key

messages, campus-wide e-mail templates, news release templates, social media messages, website resources, and posters and flyers.

- MDCH used 2013-14 as an opportunity to test use of materials and conducted a survey to seek feedback about the toolkit's usefulness.
- In 2014, MDCH conducted flu season planning webinars with colleges and universities and Alana's Foundation to identify ways to strengthen materials, uncover broader issues faced by colleges and universities in vaccinating their student populations, and generate ideas for other effective initiatives for the future.
- MDCH learned that many colleges have difficulty reaching students with flu vaccines, because of limited clinic services, difficulty purchasing vaccine, and lack of billing systems, and expanded efforts to include nearby community partners in college and university towns.
- The 2014-15 flu season included the pilot of a statewide flu vaccine competition among campuses, called the [College and University Flu Vaccination Challenge](#). MDCH provided campus health clinics and nearby community partners with outreach materials, including pre-drafted social media and email messages. Students who got vaccinated could self-report for their school through a smart phone by scanning a quick response (QR) code at their vaccination site. Vaccination sites included university health centers and on-campus clinics, local pharmacies, and health departments.
- MDCH compiled the number of vaccinated students and shared coverage data with participating schools and partners. MDCH shared the leading schools throughout the competition on social media including Facebook and Twitter and tagged participating schools. Data and social media tools were used to prompt local vaccination and drive competition within and among schools. In addition, the state recognized the university or college clinic who vaccinated the greatest number of students and who had the most improvement over last year using immunization registry data. Alana's Foundation provided trophies to the three winning schools for small, medium, and large sized institutions.

## Results:

- Preliminary results showed that the Spotify advertisements earned 1,212,316 impressions and 2,680 click-throughs. The TV advertisements delivered an estimated 250,000 to 2 million impressions, depending on the market.
- The [College and University Flu Vaccination Toolkit](#) received 2,398 hits on the MDCH website. MDCH plans to update materials based on feedback from schools and community providers.
- As a result of the statewide flu vaccine competition, 5,717 individuals self-reported their flu vaccination using the online survey tool. Data from the immunization registry through Dec. 31, 2014, shows 12,953 flu doses from 14 participating schools. Compared to the same time period the previous flu season, the participating schools entered 60% more flu vaccines into the registry while participating in the challenge.
- A formal survey seeking feedback on the toolkit's usefulness yielded a low response rate and provided minimal information. Engaging the schools directly through a regular planning webinar yielded a higher rate of feedback on materials, better understanding of issues faced by university clinics, and opportunities for schools to disseminate ideas. Schools gave positive feedback regarding ready-to-use materials and message templates that could be individualized.
- Understanding the issues faced by universities resulted in expanding to a broader community approach. MDCH now partners with community vaccinators near colleges and universities and also connects those partners with the schools themselves.

# State Story



- Other states have increasingly requested tools from Michigan's [flu gallery](#) website, especially a series of monthly flu flyers that include a flu message relevant to that month.
- New ideas to drive competition and engage young adults are evolving as MDCH and community partners work together.

## Lessons Learned:

- Maintaining linkages with partners through advisory committees can help establish open communication channels for disseminating information and engaging partners in shaping program strategy.
- Establishing planning webinars for field partners to discuss efforts, provide input to developing programs, obtain information, and problem-solve real world issues yields stronger and more useful feedback as opposed to static evaluation surveys.
- Seasonal flu efforts that build partnerships and enhance communications create readiness for pandemics. Trust among partners is built in advance, communication channels are put in place and maintained, and public health is established as a credible and accessible source for influenza information. In addition, establishing access to flu vaccine as a norm each flu season is projected to increase vaccine acceptance when novel strains enter a community.<sup>3</sup>

## Tools You Can Use: (Look for these and other tools on the MDCH [flu gallery](#) website)

- [College and University Flu Vaccination Toolkit](#): Contains strategies to increase rates, key messages, e-mail and news release templates, social media messages, posters and flyers
- [College and University Flu Infographic](#)
- [Monthly Flu Posters](#): For promoting flu vaccination across the flu season

## Funding:

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## For more information:

Courtney Londo, MA  
Adolescent and Adult Immunization Coordinator  
Michigan Department of Community Health,  
Division of Immunization  
Email: [LondoC1@michigan.gov](mailto:LondoC1@michigan.gov)

ASTHO Infectious Disease:  
Email: [infectiousdisease@astho.org](mailto:infectiousdisease@astho.org)

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<sup>1</sup> CDC. "FluVaxView: 2012-13 State and Regional Vaccination Trend Report". Available at <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/fluview/reports/report1213/trends/index.htm>. Accessed 5-29-2014.

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<sup>2</sup> Michigan Department of Community Health. College and University Vaccination Toolkit. Letter to Colleges and Universities from the Chief Medical Executive. 2013. Available at

[http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mdch/College\\_Univ\\_flu\\_letter\\_FINAL\\_438365\\_7.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mdch/College_Univ_flu_letter_FINAL_438365_7.pdf). Accessed 5-29-2014.

<sup>3</sup> Maurer J, Harris KM, Parker A, *et al.* "Does receipt of seasonal influenza vaccine predict intention to receive novel H1N1 vaccine: evidence from a nationally representative survey of U.S. adults." *Vaccine*. 2009. 27(42):5732–5734. Available at <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2771376/>. Accessed 5-5-2014.