

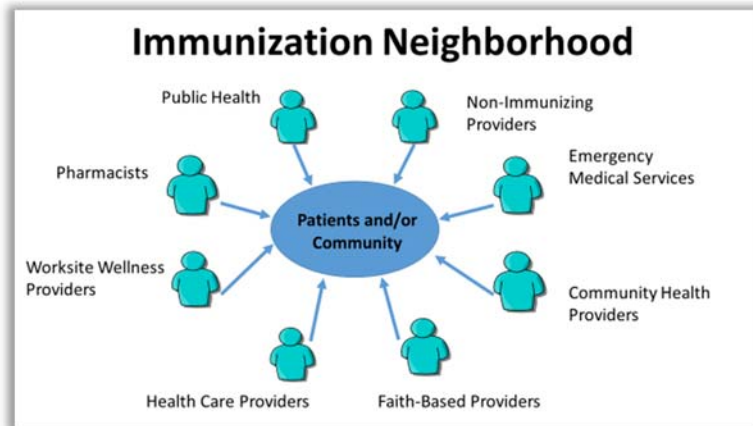
What is the Immunization Neighborhood?

Immunizations are widely hailed as one of the most successful public health accomplishments of the 20th century. Today, children, adolescents, and adults can receive immunizations to protect against 17 infectious diseases once common in the United States. Traditionally, those seeking vaccination have turned to primary care providers or health department clinics to receive immunizations; however, alternative providers, such as pharmacies, faith-based organizations, and worksites are now being recognized and utilized as valued members within the immunization neighborhood, particularly in an effort to reach adults.

The Value of the Immunization Neighborhood

The term “immunization neighborhood,” coined by the American Pharmacists Association, involves the collaboration, coordination, and communication among all immunization stakeholders to meet the immunization needs of patients and protect the public from vaccine-preventable diseases. This concept ensures that an entire community is invested in assessing, administering, and/or referring patients to receive appropriate vaccines. In addition, it supports the sharing and exchanging of immunization data among providers. Both traditional and alternative providers are encouraged to be part of the immunization neighborhood, as well as both immunizing and non-immunizing practitioners. The driver for each neighborhood rests with meeting the needs of the patient and the community.

While recognizing the value of the medical home, the core elements of collaboration, coordination and communication embodied within the immunization neighborhood can have an impact on immunization rates, especially within the adult population given their low coverage rates. The immunization neighborhood offers an abundance of alternative providers who often serve in diverse neighborhoods, including some populations with traditionally lower rates of vaccine uptake. In addition, these providers typically have the ability to target recommendations based on patients’ health conditions, such as diabetes, heart disease, or asthma, which may help to increase vaccination among those at highest risk for severe illness. Alternative settings within the immunization neighborhood also offer increased accessibility and convenience for patients, which can have a dramatic effect on immunization coverage. For example, pharmacists are a trusted provider and their practices offer extended hours for a wide population seeking vaccine. This has had a dramatic effect on the number of adults seeking vaccination services at pharmacies, which has risen from 4 percent from 1998-99 to more than 18 percent from 2010-11.¹



¹ Rothholz M. “The Role of Community Pharmacies/Pharmacists in Vaccine Delivery in the United States.” Presented at the Advisory Committee for Immunization Practice meeting, June 2013. Available at: www.cdc.gov/vaccines/acip/meetings/downloads/slides-jun-2013/01-Pharmacies-Rothholz.pdf. Accessed 2-12-14.

The Role of Immunization Neighborhood Providers

All providers within the immunization neighborhood are encouraged to stay current on vaccination guidelines and recommendations. In addition, immunizing healthcare providers are urged to assess patient vaccination status, recommend any necessary vaccinations, and administer them in accordance with state authority and CDC guidelines at the time of the visit. Non-immunizing professionals are also encouraged to assess patient vaccination status and refer patients to another health professional with vaccination capabilities as needed.

Providers within the immunization neighborhood should ensure that vaccine administration information is entered into the immunization information system (IIS) to prevent under- or over-vaccination of patients. Ideally, an IIS can be the communication link used by immunization neighborhood providers to inform the patient's medical home about vaccinations given.

The Value of Public Health within the Immunization Neighborhood

State and territorial health agencies have been, and must remain, national leaders that develop programs, advocate for policies, educate the public, and cultivate relationships to strengthen the immunization neighborhood. Public health plays a key role in forming partnerships within the immunization neighborhood to provide a systematic and coordinated approach to community-wide health.

Public health departments are well positioned to educate professionals within the immunization neighborhood by offering training, information, consultation, support and encouragement. This training can assist immunization neighborhood providers to ensure that vaccines are stored and monitored appropriately, and that practitioners follow the proper protocols for correct administration techniques, screen for contraindications, and monitor for adverse events with each vaccination given. Public health departments can also enable access to the IIS and work with immunization neighborhood providers to incorporate routine IIS immunization assessments and administration entry into their daily immunization practice. Finally, public health departments can assist with referral services for those providers that do not directly offer vaccine.

The Benefit of the Immunization Neighborhood

In a critical period when providers and public health departments are being asked to do more with fewer resources, the need for strategic collaborative relationships has never been greater. The immunization neighborhood benefits each provider by assuring a community of collaboration, coordination, and communication is applied during vaccine administration to their patients. Patients benefit from the immunization neighborhood by gaining improved access, enhanced convenience, and targeted vaccination services for those at high risk. In the end, the immunization neighborhood can benefit both providers and patients, and together, can make a difference in reducing preventable illnesses and ensuring healthier communities.

**ASTHO would like to thank the American Pharmacists Association (APhA) for their important feedback when developing this fact sheet and contributions to strengthen the immunization neighborhood.*