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VacTrAK – All Aboard!

An immunization information system (IIS) is a confidential, computerized, population-based system that collects and consolidates vaccination data from vaccine providers and provides tools for designing and sustaining effective immunization strategies at the provider and program levels.¹ VacTrAK, Alaska's IIS, includes immunization information on persons of all ages.

Among other benefits, VacTrAK allows providers to:

- Obtain consolidated patient immunization records;
- Reduce staff time spent tracking down records;
- Forecast future vaccines needed;
- Generate automated reminder/recall notices;
- Assess facility-specific immunization completion rates; and
- Electronically order state-supplied vaccine, manage vaccine inventory, and submit state-required reports. (These features will be implemented throughout 2011.)

VacTrAK began receiving reports from providers in 2009. In spite of the relative immaturity of the system during the 2009 H1N1 influenza pandemic, VacTrAK played a critical role in Alaska's distribution and inventory management of H1N1 influenza vaccine. The success of this effort was acknowledged through VacTrAK's receipt of the 2010 "Center of Excellence" award from the American Immunization Registry Association.

Currently, 115 facilities/organizations representing a broad range of Alaska providers are actively enrolled in VacTrAK (Table 1), and an additional 36 facilities are in various stages of the enrollment process. A listing of currently enrolled providers is available at: www.vactrak.alaska.gov.

Table 1: Facilities/Organizations Actively Enrolled in VacTrAK — Alaska, February 2011

Type of Facility/Organization	# Enrolled
Private Provider Facilities	77
Alaska Native Health Corporations	18
State of Alaska-owned Facilities (excluding public health centers)	12
Alaska Public Health Centers*	8
TOTAL	115

* The public health centers that are currently active in VacTrAK are Barrow, Bethel, Cordova, Dillingham, Mat/Su, Seward, Valdez and the Municipality of Anchorage. Additional public health centers will continue to be added at a steady pace, with the goal of having all centers included in VacTrAK by this summer.

As additional facilities and providers become active participants in VacTrAK, the database will grow increasingly more valuable to Alaska providers. Furthermore, widespread use of VacTrAK and its associated patient vaccine forecasting and reminder capabilities will be exceptionally helpful for improving vaccine coverage levels in Alaska children.²

VacTrAK currently contains over 4.3 million individual vaccinations, and over one-third of Alaskans have at least two immunizations recorded in the system (Table 2).

Table 2: Number of Patients and Vaccinations Recorded in VacTrAK, by Age — Alaska, February 2011

Patient Age Range (in years)	Patients		Total # Vaccinations
	Total #	# (%) with ≥2 vaccinations in VacTrAK	
0–1	23,394	8,151 (34.8%)	95,583
2–5	50,653	25,375 (50.1%)	426,909
6–18	144,523	78,784 (54.5%)	1,586,781
19+	671,366	196,081 (29.2%)	2,235,934
Total	889,936*	308,391 (34.7%)	4,345,207

* The total number of patients is greater than Alaska's current population due to inclusion of historical immunization information for persons who are no longer Alaska residents.

Currently, 61 of the 115 (53%) providers/facilities enrolled in VacTrAK submit information through direct data entry into VacTrAK's web-based system. The remainder of enrolled providers transmit data electronically to VacTrAK from an electronic health record (EHR) using either a Health Level 7 (HL7) format or a "flat" file. Although direct data entry presents many advantages in terms of data quality, timeliness, and a reduced length of time for a provider's original enrollment, it can require dual data entry for providers using EHRs, an option many find unacceptable.

One approach to accelerating the use of data transmission from EHRs is available through the federal Health Information Technology for Clinical and Economic Health (HITECH) Act. The HITECH Act authorizes incentive payments for system upgrades to eligible Medicare and Medicaid clinicians and hospitals demonstrating "meaningful use" of data contained in their EHRs, including submission of immunization data to an IIS such as VacTrAK.³ Additional information is available through the Alaska Health Information Technologies Program at <http://www.hss.state.ak.us/hit/>.

VacTrAK Enrollment

To enroll in VacTrAK, contact VacTrAK at:

Website – www.vactrak.alaska.gov

Support Desk – 866-702-8725 (866-702-TRAK)
or 907-269-0312 (in Anchorage)

Email – vactrak@alaska.gov

References

1. CDC. Progress in Immunization Information Systems – US, 2009. MMWR 2011;60 (No. 1): 10–12. Available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/pdf/wk/mm6001.pdf>
2. SOE. Improving IZ Coverage Rates in Alaska's Children. Bulletin No. 2, February 17, 2011. Available at: http://www.epi.alaska.gov/bulletins/docs/b2011_02.pdf
3. SOE. Alaska Health Information Technology Update. Bulletin No. 20, July 12, 2010. Available at: http://www.epi.alaska.gov/bulletins/docs/b2010_20.pdf