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VAC TRAK: Alaska's New Immunization Information System

Current Status of *VacTrAK*

VacTrAK, Alaska's new immunization information system (IIS), is a confidential, web-based system designed to maintain immunization information for Alaskans of all ages.

***VacTrAK* is now available for enrolled Alaska providers to receive and provide immunization information for their patients.**

VacTrAK History

In 2005, the Alaska Immunization Program conducted a needs assessment and feasibility study to determine Alaska providers' interest in participating in a statewide IIS.¹ Providers expressed strong support for the system, laying the foundation for a wide variety of efforts that have occurred over the last three years.

- Alaska public health law was modified to allow sharing of immunization information between Alaska providers and the IIS and to allow input of basic birth record information from the Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics.
- Initial funding for IIS procurement was provided through an allocation by the State of Alaska. Additional infrastructure support was made available through the annual immunization grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).
- A detailed Request for Proposals was issued, and Scientific Technologies Corporation (STC) was chosen as the IIS vendor.
- Focus group sessions were conducted with Alaska providers to introduce the system and determine training needs.
- In April 2008, *VacTrAK* "went live." Since that time, significant internal testing has occurred to confirm data integrity and security.
- A contract was established with the Indian Health Service's software vendor to enable data exchange between *VacTrAK* and the Resource and Patient Management System (RPMS) used by public health centers and Alaska Native health corporations. Continued testing has occurred to establish an option for bidirectional electronic data exchange with RPMS providers.
- Outreach was conducted with private providers through professional association meetings and conferences.
- One large Anchorage pediatric office served as a pilot practice to assist in assessing program forms, data entry/exchange mechanisms, and policies and procedures.

How to Enroll in *VacTrAK*

To enroll, Alaska physicians and mid-level providers who represent their medical facility should contact:

VAC TRAK Support

866-702-8725 (866-702-TRAK) / in Anchorage 907-269-0312

e-mail: vactrak@alaska.gov

Enrollment forms are available at www.vactrak.alaska.gov. Following enrollment, individualized training and implementation plans will be established for each facility.

How to Access *VacTrAK*

Enrolled providers can access *VacTrAK* from almost any computer that has internet access and a web browser. State of Alaska security standards are in place to ensure multiple levels of confidentiality protections, including data encryption and provider passwords that must be changed once per quarter. In addition, during enrollment each provider must agree to maintain the information in a confidential manner.

Two options are available for data input:

- (1) **Direct data entry** – Providers may enter or obtain *VacTrAK* data directly within the system. (Sample *VacTrAK* screens may be viewed at www.vactrak.alaska.gov.)
- (2) **Batch uploads** – For clinics with existing electronic systems, *VacTrAK* staff can establish a data exchange process that sends batch data directly to *VacTrAK* from an electronic medical record or from a practice management or billing system. *VacTrAK* can accept a broad range of flat text files and HL7 messages. (HL7 is the international standard established for the exchange, integration, sharing and retrieval of medical data.)

While direct data entry provides superior data quality, *VacTrAK* staff can assist with your decision about the best methodology for your facility.

Benefits of Using *VacTrAK*

VacTrAK will provide a consolidated immunization record for all Alaskans. In addition to informing daily clinic activities, *VacTrAK* may be beneficial during emergencies; a similar system proved invaluable in Louisiana in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. The system also enables providers to:

- Reduce staff time spent tracking down records,
- Forecast future immunizations needed,
- Improve the accuracy of immunization data,
- Generate automated patient reminder/recall notices,
- Produce official immunization records to meet school and child care facility requirements, and
- Assess immunization completion rates for the facility.

Future Plans

As the *VacTrAK* database becomes more complete, it will be an increasingly more valuable tool for the Alaska medical community. As new providers are added, more immunization records will be available for review. With the addition of birth certificate information, the amount of time required for initial data entry will be reduced. The system will be used for vaccine ordering and inventory management of all state-supplied vaccines. Finally, within a few years, mechanisms will be established to give access to parents so that they may review or print their child's immunization record.

Reference

1. Alaska Immunization Registry Needs Assessment and Feasibility Study. Available at: http://www.epi.hss.state.ak.us/id/iz/SIIS_Feasibility_Study.pdf