

Health Care: Immunization Information Systems

Position Statement approved by One Voice: December 8, 2006

Issue/Concern: Texas has a system for exchanging immunization information; however, due to constraints imposed by current laws, including consent requirements, the process is costly, inefficient, and administratively burdensome. Texas must ensure that healthcare providers have the immunization information they need to: a) maintain high vaccination coverage rates so that outbreaks of preventable disease can be avoided; b) allocate health resources wisely; and c) ensure public safety in the event of an emergency. Under existing law, only consented information of children less than 18 years of age is maintained in the Texas registry. When a child reaches the age of 19, his/her immunization record must be deleted and no adult vaccination information is recorded. In the event of a public health emergency, First Responders and public health officials need instant access to health records and all immunization information. *(First Responders – Fire, Police, Emergency personnel and health workers who would be first to respond in a crisis.)*

Specific Policy Recommendation(s):

- ★ Ease the administrative burden by maintaining unconsented data in a secure system until consent can be recorded or access is needed during a public health emergency.
- ★ Strengthen the Texas registry so that it can be appropriately linked to other health information networks, particularly during public health emergencies.
- ★ Allow childhood immunization records currently captured by the Texas registry to remain in the system for the lifetime of the child (important for higher education admissions and emergency preparedness).
- ★ Expand the age range of the Texas registry to include both childhood *and* adult immunization records.

How does this issue/recommendation relate to prevention and early intervention or maximizing federal funds for health and human services? If Texans were displaced due to a disaster (such as Hurricane Katrina) or a public health emergency – even within our own borders – public health officials do not currently have the capacity to provide complete immunization information to First Responders quickly or efficiently. A state-wide immunization registry that has the flexibility to securely maintain unconsented data and the software capacity to link to other inter and intra-state health information systems is a critically important piece of the larger disaster preparedness framework.

Supporting Facts/Research/Resources:

- ★ Technologically robust, populated, life-span immunization registries provide First Responders and health care providers with a critical tool for disease prevention and management.
- ★ During Hurricane Katrina, Louisiana's successful electronic transfer of immunization histories on its children and adults saved millions of public and private dollars in vaccine and administrative cost. (Houston, alone, as able to save over \$1.5 million in vaccine.)
- ★ The measles outbreaks from 1985-1991 were partly due to the fact that in 1985 our nation stopped keeping track of children's immunization status.
- ★ Houston's immunization coverage rates for children improved by 15% to 76.6% in 2005 due in large part to the successful deployment of childhood immunization registries at the city/county and state level.

Laurie Glaze, Chair
Adoptation
Avondale House
Bering Omega Community Services
Care for Elders
Career and Recovery Resources, Inc.
Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston
ChildBuilders
CHILDREN AT RISK
Christ the Good Shepherd Catholic Church
Coalition for Behavioral Health Services
Collaborative for Children
Communities In Schools
DePelchin Children's Center
Family Services of Greater Houston
Fort Bend Regional Council on Substance Abuse, Inc.
Gateway to Care
Good Neighbor Healthcare Center
Gulf Coast CHIP Coalition
Harris County Healthcare Alliance
Healthcare for the Homeless-Houston
Houston Area Association for the Education of Young Children
Houston Food Bank
IntraCare Hospitals
Jewish Family Service
Justice for Children
Legacy Community Health Services, Inc.
Memorial Hermann Healthcare System
Mental Health Association of Greater Houston
NAMI Metropolitan Houston
Neighborhood Centers, Inc.
Northwest Assistance Ministries
San Jose Clinic
SEARCH
South County Community Clinic, DBA The Community Clinic
Spaulding for Children
Target Hunger
Texas Children's Hospital
The Arc of Greater Houston
The Center for Success and Independence
The Arrow Project
The Network of Behavioral Health Providers
United Way of Greater Houston
Wesley Community Center
YMCA of Greater Houston

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Legislative Outcome: SB 11 passed into law and includes expanding information maintained in the Texas registry. SB 11 allows First Responders and their immediate families to store immunization data in the immunization registry prior to a public health emergency. Additionally, the Department of State Health Services is required to educate First Responders about the registry.

*Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; Every Child By Two; Texas Department of State Health Services; Houston Department of Health & Human Services.

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