

Review of the Public Health Infant-Preschool Immunization Program: Current Practice Review of Parents, Public Health Nurses and Physicians

Type of Project: Research

Organization: Northern Health
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Objective:

This project is part of a larger Review of the Public Health Infant-Preschool Immunization Program. The overall objectives of the review are to identify best practice in childhood immunizations in health authorities (particularly rural regions) and to achieve an understanding of what is happening throughout the Northern Health region with respect to infant-preschool immunizations (i.e., evaluate current service). This information will provide the basis for the development of a comprehensive plan that will be evidence-based, implemented consistently in all Northern Health communities, and will improve immunization coverage rates in the infant-preschool population.

Target Audience: Healthcare Professionals/Parents

Project Summary:

	Objectives	Approach
PARENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To evaluate immunization services in Northern Health (NH) from the parent perspective To understand parent-perceived supports and barriers to infant-preschool immunization in NH To understand why some parents fall behind the routine immunization schedule in NH 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parent survey with parents attending Child Health Clinics for their child's 6, 12 or 18 month immunization Parent survey mailed out to parents identified through audit reviews as being behind at 9 and 20 months Parent focus groups
PUBLIC HEALTH NURSES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To evaluate immunization services in NH from the Provider (PHN) perspective Where are there consistencies and inconsistencies in practice? (i.e., in promotion, booking appointments, reminders, and services provided at Child Health Clinics) What has worked and what has not worked in their communities? What do they perceive are barriers to attaining immunization coverage targets in the infant-preschool population? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PHN survey
PHYSICIANS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To understand Family Physician key issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Survey

Completion Date: June 2008

Outcomes:

This study included participation from 604 parents, 53 Public Health Nurses (PHNs) and 101 Family Physicians and Pediatricians, as well as a best practices literature review and interviews with key informants from 8 regional health authorities in Western Canada.

The top three supports for parents in this study in having their children immunized were opportunities to ask questions, convenient clinic locations and ease of making appointments. The top three barriers expressed by parents were long wait times for appointments, conflicting information from multiple sources about vaccine safety, and inconvenient days/times for appointments.

PHNs indicated that having adequate time to spend with families and good clinic organization were the top strengths of the current program, along with practical supports such as reminder systems and having assistants at clinics. Main areas for improvement were more PHNs, improved clinic organization, more immunization promotion, more time for professional development and new outreach locations.

Family physicians and pediatricians suggested alternate service delivery models, enhanced promotion, resources and education. The effectiveness of communication between public health nursing and physicians varied from excellent to poor across the region. A system of effective, consistent sharing of information about patients' immunization status is needed.

Recommendations were developed for broad directions for improvement, specific program delivery changes, and next steps for knowledge translation and program planning. A series of planning meetings will be held with public health throughout the region in late 2008/early 2009.