



STATE OF NEW YORK DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Corning Tower The Governor Nelson A. Rockefeller Empire State Plaza Albany, New York 12237

Richard F. Daines, M.D.
Commissioner

Wendy E. Saunders
Chief of Staff

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Dear Doctor:

The purpose of this letter is to share additional information regarding the implementation of the New York State Immunization Information System (NYSIIS), New York's new statewide web-based immunization registry. The New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) has undertaken this public health initiative, pursuant to Article 21, Title 6, Section 2168 of the Public Health Law, to improve the health of children in New York State. However, this initiative can be effective only in partnership with the physicians and providers who directly care for children. The purpose of this letter is to address some of the concerns that have been brought to our attention.

Entering historical immunization data

Since NYSIIS is being implemented regionally, some physicians still do not have all of the details about how NYSIIS works. This has led to concern about NYSIIS implementation, in particular the time it will take to enter historical data. NYSIIS is based on software developed and used successfully for a number of years in 12 other states. As a result, the data entry process has been streamlined. For children born in New York since January 1, 2004, a NYSIIS record will already exist in the system; therefore, the name and other demographic information will not have to be reentered. For entry of historical data, only two pieces of data are required to be entered: the date of vaccination and type of vaccine. With practice, the full vaccine history on an older child can be entered in less than five minutes, with less time needed for younger children. We encourage you and/or your staff to get trained on the system and its features. Formal in-person and webinar training is ongoing throughout the state (schedule enclosed). If you would like to try the system before scheduled training in your region, a training account can be set up and you can then access the user manual online.

Electronic data entry

Additional options are available for automatic data entry into NYSIIS of current and historical data maintained in billing systems or electronic medical records. Department of Health staff are available to work on these options with your staff or software vendor. If you would like to follow up on these offers of technical assistance, please contact the NYSIIS Technical Help Desk at 1-866-389-0371 or nysiishelpdesk@hp.com.

Benefits of the immunization information system

NYSIIS is not intended to be primarily a system to report data to the state. The true benefit to physicians will be in the information they get out of the system. This includes tools to help in managing the complex pediatric vaccine schedule such as patient-specific reminders of vaccine doses recommended; reminders of patients due or overdue for immunizations; warnings

about invalid vaccine doses; prospective tracking of vaccine lot numbers in the event of recalls; and the ability to generate reminder and recall notices for patients. Practice and physician coverage levels can be tracked and official immunization records printed for entrance into daycare, school, camp and college. Without the historical data in the system, much of this functionality will be lost. A recent article in *Pediatrics* indicated that, once fully implemented, immunization registries can be cost saving in the long run (*Pediatrics*. 2006; 188 (3): 1293-1295).

Partnerships with providers

The Department has worked closely with provider groups regarding this immunization initiative. Input was received from a variety of sources including the Medical Society of the State of New York, the New York State Academy of Family Physicians and the American Academy of Pediatrics. The Department has been clear in communications with these groups that technical assistance, training, education and joint problem solving are the main tools to implement NYSIIS so that the system can be made to work for everyone to improve child health. The Department does not intend to rely on penalties or sanctions during the implementation of the system, which will take several years to fully implement. Physicians are asked to work with the Department through this process and take the opportunity to see the system and become familiar with it. Recognizing the unique needs of each physician's office, NYSIIS staff is providing individualized technical assistance for practices and will continue to do so throughout the implementation period.

Your support of New York's new web-based application and cooperation throughout the implementation period is invaluable to the system's success. For more details on NYSIIS, please visit our web site at: http://www.nyhealth.gov/prevention/immunization/information_system or on the NYSDOH Health Commerce System at: <https://commerce.health.state.ny.us/hpn/bcdc/immunization/nysiis.html>.

If you have any questions or comments, please contact NYSIIS staff at the NYSDOH Immunization Program at (518) 473-4437 or nysiis@health.state.ny.us.

Sincerely,

Guthrie Birkhead, M.D., M.P.H.
Deputy Commissioner
Office of Public Health

Enclosure

cc: Local Health Department Commissioners and Public Health Directors