Roles and Responsibilities

Revision Date: September 25, 2018

Delivery of Childhood Immunization in Alberta

The provision of routine immunization programs and targeted immunization programs is a vital public health priority in Alberta, and a core public health program. Alberta Health's childhood immunization mandate is to protect Alberta children from vaccine-preventable diseases by ensuring as complete immunization coverage as possible. The delivery of childhood immunization programs in Alberta is provided exclusively through Alberta Health Services Public Health in an effective, efficient, cost-effective, and standardized manner.¹

This mandate is fulfilled by Alberta Health Services Public Health who continues to be well positioned to deliver routine childhood immunization programs, and retains the responsibility for ensuring that all children have access to and are offered immunizations according to Alberta’s immunization schedule.

Immunization Opportunities

Each encounter with a health practitioner is an opportunity to review the individual’s immunization status.

Childhood and School
See AHS Responsibilities

Occupational Settings

Assessment of immunization status of new employees may be part of the occupational health service provided by the employer. Some occupations have particular risks for specific vaccine-preventable diseases (e.g., animal care and control workers, health care and laboratory workers), and the employee may be eligible for provincially funded vaccine. See Occupational Considerations for Immunization.

Post-secondary Educational Institutions

Entrance to post-secondary educational institutions is a convenient and appropriate time to review the immunization status of individuals and to offer any necessary vaccines. See Occupational Considerations for Immunization.

Long-term Care Facilities

- Long term/continuing care facilities should have an annual influenza immunization program in place to ensure that all residents are protected every year. A resident’s immunization status should be reviewed and updated on admission. All immunizations received should be documented on the resident's personal file. Specific groups to target include:
  - Adult and senior residents – pneumococcal vaccine and annual influenza vaccine for those 65 years of age and older and those with at-risk health conditions.
  - Staff – up-to-date routine immunizations and annual influenza vaccine. See Occupational Considerations for Immunization.

Acute Care Facilities

- Opportunities to immunize high-risk clients (e.g. tetanus-prone injuries in ER, clients on kidney dialysis units, infants hospitalized for solid organ transplant) in an acute care facility before discharge will ensure that an immunization opportunity is not missed, as it is harder to follow up once clients enter the community.
  - Age groups targeted for immunization in acute care facilities include:
    - Newborns born to mothers who are HBsAg carriers or who develop acute hepatitis B infection in the third trimester of pregnancy – hepatitis B immune globulin (HBIG) and first dose of hepatitis B vaccine. Refer to: Alberta Prenatal Screening Program for Selected Communicable Diseases – Public Health Guidelines.²
    - High risk (underlying medical conditions) – may be eligible for various vaccines. See Special Situations for Immunization – Immunization of Specific Populations.
Responsibilities of All Healthcare Practitioners

- Discuss immunization with clients and parents/guardians.\(^3\)
- Obtain informed consent prior to any immunization.
- Provide every client with a record of each immunization received.
- Adhere to the guidelines outlined in the Alberta Immunization Policy when administering provincially funded vaccines.
- Maintain immunization records.
- Report the administration of provincially funded vaccines electronically as per Immunization Data Submission and Response Guidelines. Include individual’s name, date of birth, personal health number, date of immunization, vaccine name and manufacturer, lot number, dose, site and route of administration, delivery management site and name and title of the person administering the vaccine.
- Ensure that vaccines maintain potency through optimal transportation, storage and handling. See Alberta Vaccine Cold Chain Policy.\(^4\)
- Monitor and report adverse events following immunization as per Adverse Events Following Immunization Policy for Alberta Immunization Providers.\(^5\)
- Ensure knowledge of immunization practice is current.
- Provide specific provincially funded vaccines to at-risk and/or adult clients.

Alberta Health Services Responsibilities

General Responsibilities

- Ensure that AHS Immunization Standards are congruent with Alberta Immunization Policy.
- Ensure that public health professionals in AHS Zones are current in their knowledge of immunization practice.
- Have regional plans in place to support public health efforts for large immunization campaigns if needed (e.g., pandemic influenza).
- Ensure the efficient distribution and use of vaccines. Supply specific provincially funded vaccines to external providers (e.g., physicians), ensuring compliance with provincial recommendations for use, appropriate storage and handling and proper documentation of use.

Children

- Ensure that children are immunized as closely as possible to the provincially established immunization schedule and according to Alberta’s Immunization Policy.
- Ensure that no child is unimmunized except with the express, active decision of the parent (or child) to refuse immunization.
- Follow up on children who are not up to date for immunization as per schedule specified in the Alberta Immunization Policy.
- Monitor immunization coverage of children and develop and implement plans to ensure that Alberta’s goals and objectives for immunization are attained. See Immunization Goals and Objectives.
School

The Public Health Act\(^6\) and the Student Record Regulation\(^7\) under the School Act provides school boards with the authority to disclose information from the student record to the MOH/designate upon written request for the purpose of contacting the parent of the student regarding voluntary health programs including immunization offered by AHS. This process facilitates contact with parents or guardians by public health nurses about immunization programs offered in schools.

- Review immunization records for all students in grades 1 to 9, and identify and offer immunizations to students who have incomplete immunizations.

- Focus on students in grades 1, 6 and 9 to update immunizations and offer in-school immunization (Hepatitis B, HPV, dTap, and Meningococcal vaccines). See School Immunization Schedule.

- Contact parents of students who do not have complete immunization coverage at least three times per year except in the case of a refusal or medical contraindication.

- Monitor immunization coverage of students in Grade 1, 6 and 9, and develop and implement plans to ensure that Alberta’s goals and objectives for immunization are attained. See Immunization Goals and Objectives.

Adults and high-risk populations

- Update immunization according to age and eligibility criteria as adults (18 years of age and older) present to public health.

- High risk individuals due to disease, condition, or treatment may be eligible for additional vaccines. See Immunization of Specific Populations.

- The Prenatal Screening program identifies new mothers who are susceptible to rubella and varicella. Susceptible individuals are offered immunization after delivery. Refer to: Alberta Prenatal Screening Program for Selected Communicable Diseases – Public Health Guidelines.\(^2\)

References