



Mike DeWine, Governor
Jon Husted, Lt. Governor

Maureen Corcoran, Director

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Kevin R. Walter, Press Secretary, Ohio Department of Medicaid
614-752-3688 | kevin.walter@medicaid.ohio.gov

Lisa Lawless, Communications Director, Ohio Department of Medicaid
614-813-5357 | lisa.lawless@medicaid.ohio.gov

Ohio Medicaid launches a series of unique initiatives for Ohioans most vulnerable to COVID-19

ODM teams with managed care organizations to launch childhood immunization push

COLUMBUS, Ohio – The Ohio Department of Medicaid (ODM) has joined forces with the five Medicaid managed care organizations (MCO) to introduce new initiatives to address gaps in childhood immunizations – a side effect of the pandemic that emerged as families stayed home to slow the spread of COVID-19. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the American Academy of Pediatrics confirmed a notable decline in routine pediatric vaccination rates due to the pandemic.

Medicaid adopts a population health approach to these initiatives – a method aimed at improving the health of the entire population by understanding the distribution of health and factors contributing to it within a community. It enables the agency to more effectively identify and reduce health inequities, to gain insights into a broad range of factors that influence health, and to strengthen its focus on the individual.

Over the coming weeks, several population health initiatives will begin – each designed to reduce the spread of coronavirus, address unintended consequences of COVID-19 prevention protocols, and leverage newly enacted telehealth expansions to extend access to care to small community and rural health care providers.

These initiatives adhere to the Institute for Healthcare Improvement’s (IHI) “science of improvement,” a model that accelerates quality improvement and traces back to W. Edwards Deming’s total quality management philosophy. The IHI model calls for collaborative design, disciplined implementation, and rigorous measurements – quality components required by Medicaid MCOs to meet annual performance requirements.

“ODM is working to maximize impact in improving immunization rates,” said Maureen Corcoran, director of ODM. “Improving children’s health and ensuring their ability to thrive is a cornerstone of the Medicaid program and a priority of Governor DeWine. As a nurse, I appreciate the clinical importance of childhood immunizations and am devoted to working with the managed care organizations to ensure easier access to the tools kids need to thrive.”

Three strategic solutions will be launched to close the gap in childhood immunizations. These initiatives include:

- **Increasing mobile immunization capabilities.** Providers that have mobile care units (e.g. hospital systems and health departments) are working with Medicaid and the MCOs to orchestrate immunization events in neighborhoods where a high percentage of Medicaid children need vaccinations. The MCOs help identify [Medicaid childhood immunization events-week of Oct. 19](#) and bolster attendance through member outreach and incentives.

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- **Providing outreach and scheduling support to Vaccines for Children (VFC) program providers for immunization.** Partnering VFC practices identify children with vaccine gaps and connect with their families and caregivers to schedule appointments, eliminate barriers (e.g., transportation), and follow up afterward.
- **Expanding options for families to obtain vaccinations by growing the network.** This initiative will reimburse providers not enrolled in VFC program until the immunization gap is reduced.

Additional COVID-related prevention and intervention strategies will be introduced that address care transportation needs, and socially engaging seniors isolated in nursing facilities and assisted living residences, and more.

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