Improving First Responder Vaccination Coverage and Disaster Response Preparation
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Background

Lessons Learned from Hurricane Harvey in 2017

- Many first responders were unvaccinated or unaware of their status prior to deployment, leading to urgent requests for vaccines.
  - Many may have been re-vaccinated for diseases they already had immunity against.
- The delay between vaccine administration and protection placed many first responders at risk for disease.
- The delay also increased the risk of first responders spreading diseases to their communities and loved ones.
CDC Immunization Recommendations for Disaster Responders:

- **Tetanus**: Responders should receive a tetanus booster if they have not been vaccinated for tetanus during the past 10 years.
  - **Td** (tetanus/diphtheria) or **Tdap** (tetanus/diphtheria/pertussis) can be used.
  - Getting the Tdap formula for one tetanus booster during adulthood is recommended to maintain protection against pertussis.
- **Hepatitis B**: The Hepatitis B vaccine series is recommended for persons who will be performing direct patient care or otherwise expected to have contact with bodily fluids.
- **Influenza**: All adults should receive an annual flu vaccine as the first and most important step in protecting against flu viruses. For more information on the flu vaccines, visit: [https://www.cdc.gov/flu/prevent/prevention.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/flu/prevent/prevention.htm)

Potential Barriers to Vaccinations

- Lack of personal resources
  - Insurance coverage (underinsured, uninsured)
    - e.g., Volunteer first responder organizations who may not offer insurance coverage
  - Transportation (e.g., lack of car, public transportation)
  - Vaccination resources (e.g., clinics, support)
    - Time (e.g., working multiple jobs, vaccination not a priority)
- Lack of knowledge of vaccinations for first responders and of their importance
- Lack of immunization history
- Vaccine hesitancy
First Responders Project

• The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) awarded the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) Immunization Program funds in 2019 as part of the Crisis Cooperative Agreement.
• The Texas DSHS Immunization Program partnered with local health department (LHD) grantees.
• Goal: To increase vaccination coverage among first responders in preparation for disaster response.
First Responders Project Objectives

• Build sustainable relationships with first responder organizations.
• Educate first responders on importance of vaccines and save their records with targeted information.
• Raise first responder vaccine coverage rates.
  • Td/Tdap, HepB, Flu specifically
• Long-term documentation of first responder vaccinations through state IIS.
  • Texas Immunization Registry, ImmTrac2
First Responders Project Activities

LHD grantees performed targeted outreach activities to identified Texas first responder organizations.

- Built rapport with agency leadership and staff
- Distributed educational materials on vaccines.
  - e.g., program and vaccine materials, NVAC Standards for Adult Immunization
- Conducted trainings for participation in ImmTrac2.
- Provided resources on obtaining vaccinations.
  - Partnered with local organizations to schedule immunization events (e.g., health fairs, drive through clinics, mobile clinics)
  - Texas Adult Safety Net (ASN) Program

First Responders Project Successes

- Increased number of vaccinated first responders by 190%.
- Increased number of first responders consented in ImmTrac2 by 176%.
- Development of standard operating procedures meant to encourage vaccination and documentation in some first responder agencies.
  - Vaccinating new first responder staff and consenting them into ImmTrac2
- Development of outreach strategies targeting first responders with vaccination information.
  - e.g., social media campaign, educational video
- Strengthened relationships for project goal sustainability after project’s conclusion
  - COVID-19 vaccinations during pandemic, mass clinics
### First Responders Project Successes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Immunization</th>
<th>Baseline - 3/11/2019</th>
<th>Final - 7/6/2021</th>
<th>% Increase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hep A series</td>
<td>10,887</td>
<td>21,323</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hep B series</td>
<td>16,069</td>
<td>28,366</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MMR series</td>
<td>15,971</td>
<td>27,979</td>
<td>75%</td>
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<tr>
<td>HPV series</td>
<td>4,851</td>
<td>7,941</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 dose of PCV and PPSV vaccines</td>
<td>509</td>
<td>1,509</td>
<td>196%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 tetanus-containing vaccine dose in the last 10 years</td>
<td>26,085</td>
<td>38,102</td>
<td>46%</td>
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<tr>
<td>MenB series</td>
<td>535</td>
<td>2,400</td>
<td>349%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Flu dose in the last 12 months</td>
<td>7,230</td>
<td>8,603</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Varicella series</td>
<td>8,218</td>
<td>16,690</td>
<td>103%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zoster series</td>
<td>598</td>
<td>1,620</td>
<td>171%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NOTE:** Flu based off doses administered during each calendar year
First Responders Project Challenges

- COVID-19 Pandemic
  - Prevented LHD staff from entering workspaces.
  - Redirected LHD resources away from the project to containing the pandemic.
  - Slowed project activities and administration of other vaccines considerably.
- Barriers in hiring and retaining staff within LHDs.
- Negative attitudes towards vaccines and the project among first responder agencies.
Adult Safety Net (ASN) Program

Program Information
- The ASN Program supplies vaccines at no cost to enrolled providers.
- Increased access to adult vaccines for eligible populations.
- Removes financial barriers of receiving adult vaccines for eligible populations.

Eligibility
Patients:
- 19 years of age or older, and
- No health insurance (uninsured)

Providers:
- Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC)
- Rural Health Center (RHC)
- Local Health Department
- State Health Department
- Federally Recognized Indian Tribes
ASN Contact Information

Email: ASNInfo@dshs.texas.gov

ASN Program Website: https://www.dshs.texas.gov/immunize/ASN/

Thank you!