

# Integrating Immunization Education into Extension Health Curricula: A New Paradigm for Vaccine Confidence

Michelle S. Rodgers, Extension Foundation  
 Laura H. Downey, Auburn University

### BACKGROUND

The Extension Collaborative on Immunization Teaching and Engagement (EXCITE) was launched in 2021 to address vaccine confidence and demand among rural audiences and other populations experiencing barriers to health care. EXCITE funding supported state-level projects through Extension at 80 land-grant institutions, resulting in 958 partnerships and reaching 51,902,682 individuals with immunization education.

In 2025, EXCITE transitioned to a regional immunization education staffing model within Extension.

### APPROACH

EXCITE established health agent positions (Figure 1) across the United States. These agents are responsible for immunization education (50%), leadership and capacity building (25%), partnership development (10%), and professional development and evaluation (15%). Immunization education has been embedded in existing curricula or approaches (Table 1) and is being evaluated to assess the following outcomes.

- Confidence in vaccine safety
- Perceived importance of vaccines for individual health
- Perceived effectiveness in preventing infection, severe illness, and hospitalization
- Intention to receive an adult immunization, talk with a health care provider, check vaccination records, and seek additional vaccine information

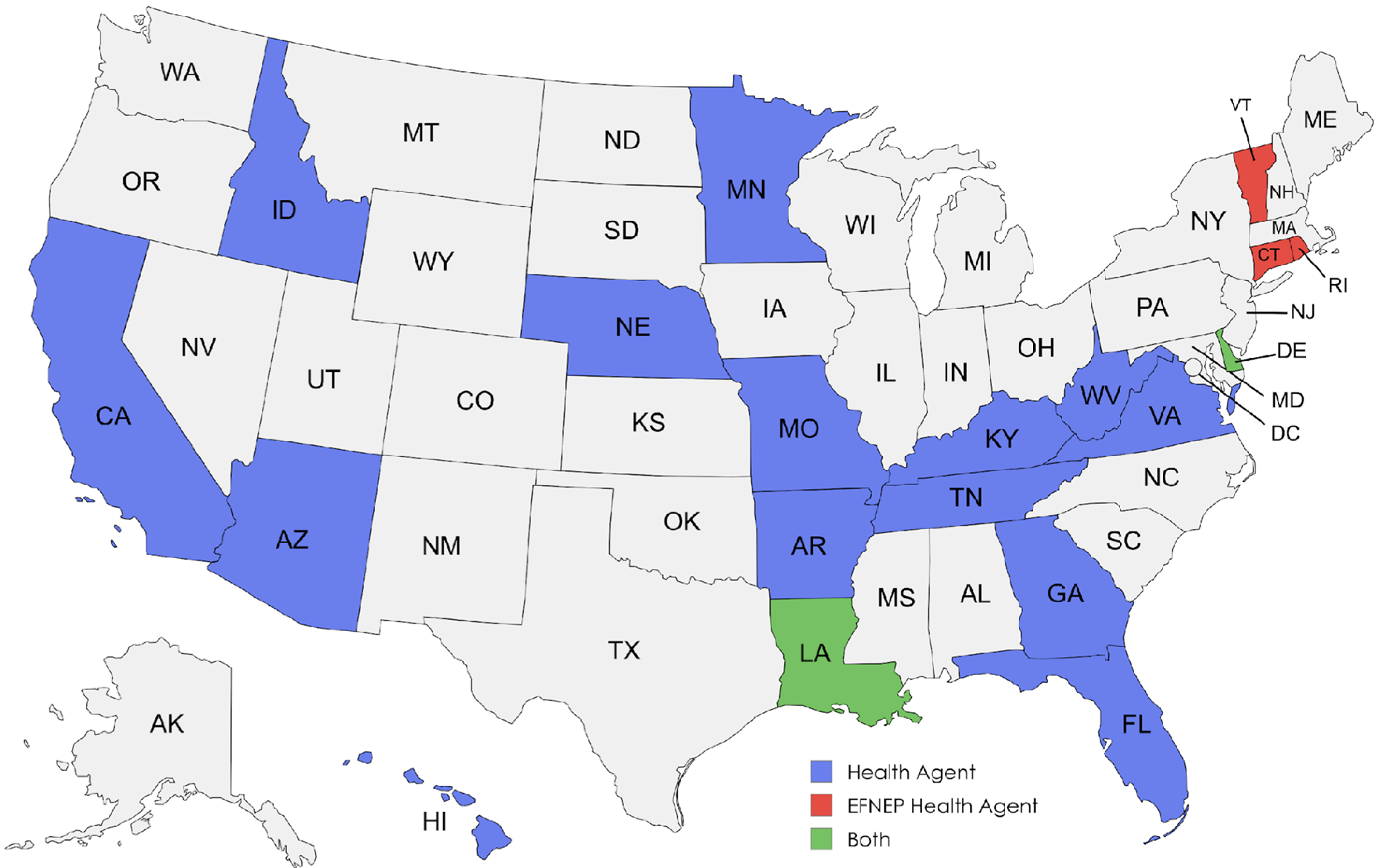


Figure 1. Location of EXCITE Health Agents

### PILOT IMPLEMENTATION

Integration of immunization education was piloted through the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP), reaching 23,599,973. EFNEP staff in 5 states are funded and continue to deliver immunization education through in-person nutrition classes, on social media, and in print materials.

### CONCLUSIONS & IMPLICATIONS

EXCITE demonstrates Extension's capacity to mobilize nationally to increase confidence in adult immunizations. Shifting immunization education into a whole health framework strengthens sustainability within Extension and embeds crucial vaccine information within established, trusted health contexts.



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Table 1. EXCITE Immunization Education Curricula

Title	Description
Balanced Living with Diabetes	A diabetes lifestyle management and support program that integrates adult immunization education
Diabetes Prevention Program (DPP)	Immunization education supplements designed for integration into the CDC National DPP curriculum, aligned with specific session topics and evidence-based talking points
Health Workers: Empowering Adult Immunization Education	An online training program that prepares health workers to serve as effective messengers for adult immunization education
How to Talk to Your Doctor: Learn, Understand, and Decide about Vaccines	A health literacy program that builds skills for discussing vaccines with healthcare providers using evidence-based information that addresses common concerns
Increasing HPV Vaccination among University Students	A collaborative effort between Extension and university student health professionals to increase HPV vaccine awareness and uptake among college students
Increasing Immunization Messaging and Resources for EFNEP	Five brief "facts vs. myths" messages designed for integration into nutrition education and other health programs to increase understanding of the importance of vaccination
Linking Animal and Human Health: Toolkits for Use with Ag and Rural Audiences	Agriculture-focused toolkits that use livestock examples to explain vaccine safety, effectiveness, and value, then bridge to human immunization through discussions and outreach materials
Poverty Informed Strategies for Immunization Education	A poverty-competency workshop for community health partners that applies evidence-based strategies for immunization education and supports development of team-specific action plans
Stay Strong, Stay Healthy	A strength and fitness program for older adults that includes supplemental education on preventive health services and vaccines within the existing curriculum