



SOCIETY OF INFECTIOUS
DISEASES PHARMACISTS

9/21/2020

The Honorable Alex M. Azar II
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Azar,

The Society of Infectious Diseases Pharmacists (SIDP) supports the guidance issued by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) on August 19, 2020, to authorize state-licensed pharmacists to order and administer vaccines for children aged 3-18 years. Given the alarming decline in children receiving recommended vaccinations during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the overall opportunity to increase childhood vaccination rates and access, we support and commend this approach.

The dramatic decrease in childhood vaccination rates this year is a grave cause for concern and must be addressed immediately, particularly as many children are returning to school. Failure to boost immunization rates will leave many communities across the nation vulnerable to outbreaks of serious vaccine-preventable diseases, such as measles, further straining our healthcare system and putting lives at risk during an already challenging time. **Deploying qualified pharmacists will support the efforts to increase vaccination rates among children, as pharmacists are the most readily accessible healthcare professionals for many patients, particularly in underserved communities.** Pharmacist-administered immunization programs have improved vaccination rates in many settings, including during the H1N1 influenza pandemic.

Families should also be encouraged to visit their children's pediatrician, and we agree with the HHS guidance requiring pharmacists to counsel families on the importance of routine pediatric care. We equally support that the HHS guidance requires the use of state immunization information systems, which will help ensure that pediatricians can follow the vaccination records of their patients, wherever they are immunized. These protections and practices are already in place for adults in many areas of the country.

We also support HHS authorizing state-licensed pharmacists, on September 9, 2020, to order and administer future COVID-19 vaccinations to persons 3 years of age and older. We recognize that a coordinated COVID-19 mass-vaccination plan will be critical for succeeding against the COVID-19 pandemic. Given the large number of persons we must vaccinate in order to protect our population, it is prudent to empower pharmacists, along with all qualified healthcare workers, to achieve this shared national goal. Pharmacy-based immunization training is offered in over 90% of U.S. pharmacy schools and is becoming commonplace for practicing pharmacists. Pharmacists can administer adult

immunizations in all states and can recommend or prescribe vaccines in many. **As such, pharmacists are well positioned to not only administer COVID-19 vaccines, but also to recommend and order it for eligible patients.**

Lastly, we encourage HHS efforts to ensure pharmacists offering vaccines are afforded evidence-based measures to minimize the risk of COVID-19 transmission, including use of appropriate personal protective equipment and masks as well as procedures for distancing patients and their families.

We support HHS' ongoing leadership during this public health emergency, particularly its important efforts to increase childhood immunization access.

Sincerely,

The Society of Infectious Diseases Pharmacists

About SIDP

SIDP is an association of pharmacists and allied healthcare professionals dedicated to promoting the appropriate use of antimicrobial agents. SIDP membership is comprised of 1,500 members in hospital, academic, industry, governmental organizations, and other practice settings across all 50 states and throughout the globe. The mission of SIDP is to advance infectious diseases pharmacy and lead antimicrobial stewardship in order to optimize the care of patients.

Contact

Email: sidp@affinity-strategies.com

Phone: (331) 248-7888

Mailing Address:

110 E. Schiller Street

Suite 230

Elmhurst, IL 60126