



**NORTH DAKOTA**  
DEPARTMENT *of* HEALTH

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## NEWS RELEASE

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### **State Health Department and Coal Country Community Health Center Work To Ensure Easy Access to Vaccinations for Underinsured Children**

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Health and Coal Country Community Health Center, Beulah, N.D., are working to ensure easy access to vaccinations for underinsured children through the federal Vaccines For Children Program, according to State Health Officer Terry Dwelle, M.D.

The Vaccines For Children (VFC) Program is a federal entitlement program that supplies vaccines for children 18 and younger who are Medicaid-eligible, uninsured, Native American or Alaskan Native, or underinsured. Underinsured is defined as having a health insurance plan that does not cover a particular vaccine. The VFC Program mandates that underinsured children must receive VFC vaccine only at clinics designated as federally qualified health centers or rural health clinics.

Coal Country Community Health Center, a federally qualified health center, has agreed to delegate authority to local public health units and private health-care providers across the state that will allow them to provide VFC vaccine to underinsured North Dakota children. Once the delegation process is complete, participating immunization providers may begin vaccinating underinsured children with VFC vaccine.

“I commend our partners at Coal Country Community Health Center for working with us to address this immunization issue,” Dwelle said. “Without this delegation of authority, providers would have to refer their underinsured patients to a rural health clinic or federally qualified health center to receive VFC vaccine. As a result, many patients would have to travel to another clinic to seek vaccination which, unfortunately, may cause them to forgo immunizations altogether.”

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“Part of the mission of Coal Country Community Health Center is to collaborate with local, state and federal public health departments to ensure that the patients in our rural state have access to high quality and affordable health care,” said Dr. Aaron Garman, Coal Country Community Health Center medical director. “We are pleased to partner with providers across the state in helping children eligible for the VFC program continue to have access to life-saving vaccines.”

Letters of agreement were sent last week to all local public health units and private health-care providers in North Dakota. Each provider who wishes to participate will sign the agreement and return it to the Department of Health. Once Coal Country Community Health Center signs the agreement, the department will notify the participating immunization provider that the delegation of authority is in place and vaccination of underinsured children with VFC vaccine may begin.

The Department of Health has contacted other federally qualified health centers that may be interested in delegating VFC authority to public and private providers, but that process is still ongoing.

“Our children are precious,” Dwelle said. “I’m confident that providers in North Dakota will continue their commitment to protecting our children with life-saving vaccinations by participating in this program. Together, we can continue to safeguard the health of every North Dakota child.”

For more information, contact Molly Sander, Immunization Program manager for the North Dakota Department of Health, at 701.328.2378 or [msander@nd.gov](mailto:msander@nd.gov).

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