



Scott Harris, M.D., M.P.H.
STATE HEALTH OFFICER

October 15, 2019

Dear Healthcare Systems, Health Insurers, and Medical Associations:

Subject: Educate Your Providers and Staff About Human Papillomavirus (HPV) Cancer and Vaccine

The Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH), Immunization Division, convened the Alabama Adolescent Vaccine Task Force (AAVTF) to address the low adolescent vaccination rates statewide. There is such a concern statewide about our adolescent children getting pertussis, cancer, and meningitis, that multiple organizations have joined the AAVTF to brainstorm about how to increase vaccination rates and protect them from disease and cancer.

The AAVTF membership includes: ADPH, Alabama Cancer Society, Alabama Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), Alabama State Department of Education, Alabama Medicaid Agency, Alabama Pharmacy Association, Alabama Vaccine Advisory Committee, Blue Cross Blue Shield, Human Rights Watch, Laura Crandell Brown Foundation, Mitchell Cancer Institute, University of Alabama at Birmingham, University of South Alabama, and VAX 2 Stop Cancer Foundation.

The AAVTF is requesting that all healthcare systems, health insurers, and medical association in Alabama send a letter to their providers with the enclosed information about HPV vaccine and cancers and include the need for a strong recommendation for adolescent vaccines. HPV vaccine has the lowest vaccine rate of all adolescent vaccines by far. The AAVTF developed the letter enclosed to assist your organization with specific HPV language to help all providers understand and promote the vaccine. With a statewide unified message, we hope to increase the HPV vaccination rates up to 80 percent.

The AAVTF stands ready to help your providers increase their adolescent and HPV vaccine rates. If you would like to speak with a peer HPV champion, contact AAP at 334-954-2543. To schedule an adolescent quality improvement visit, contact ADPH at 1-800-469-4599.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Scott Harris".

Scott Harris, M.D., M.P.H.
State Health Officer

SH/CL/CM

Dear Physician, Physician Assistant, Nurse Practitioner, and Pharmacies,

As a clinician, there is nothing more important than safeguarding the health of your patients. Currently, human papillomavirus (HPV) related cancers and low HPV vaccination rates are a growing concern among many Alabama vaccination providers.

To offset HPV cancer incidence rates, insert organization name and AAVTF have collaborated to identify strategies aimed at improving HPV rates by engaging and influencing effective communication recommendations among providers and parents.

To optimize our efforts, we are requesting all vaccine providers to increase HPV vaccination rates now. Vaccination rates for adolescents need and can be 80 percent¹, when providers make a strong recommendation. Your participation will help to increase HPV vaccination and decrease HPV related cancers throughout the state.

Recent studies show that HPV-related cancers are at a crisis level in Alabama².

Alabama HPV related cancer rates:

- Alabama ranks 3rd in the nation for cervical cancer incidence rate².
- Alabama ranks 1st in the nation for cervical cancer mortality².
- Alabama ranks 5th in the nation for oral cancer incidence rate³.
- Alabama ranks 7th in the nation for oral cancer mortality³.

Even more alarming are the low HPV vaccination rates reported statewide⁴.

Alabama HPV vaccination rates and problems:

- Averages 19.05 percent HPV UTD for adolescent aged 11-15 years of age^{4,5}.
- Twenty counties are without a pediatrician (Bibb, Cherokee, Choctaw, Clarke, Clay, Cleburne, Conecuh, Crenshaw, Fayette, Geneva, Greene, Hale, Henry, Lamar, Lowndes, Monroe, Perry, Pickens, Wilcox, and Winston Counties)⁴.
- Not enough Vaccines For Children (VFC) Program providers to service all eligible adolescents⁶.

Current HPV Recommendations:

- ACIP recommends two doses of HPV vaccine for both boys and girls as early as age 9 to 14 years⁷. ACIP recommendations are the standard of care.
- To complete the child on time, please consider administering the first does of HPV vaccine between 9-10 years of age. When they come back for Tdap vaccine for school, administer all 3 adolescent vaccines and the child will be up-to-date by 11-12.

The best HPV vaccine recommendation should be presumptive, treat all three vaccines equal, and focus on cancer prevention⁸:

- “Now that Johnny is 11 years of age, he is due for vaccines against meningitis, HPV cancers and whooping cough. We will give those at the end of today’s visit.”

In order to effectively reach parents or guardians for HPV uptake, numerous CDC recommended resources are available.

Resources for Clinicians:

- Talking to Parents about HPV Vaccine
<https://www.cdc.gov/hpv/hcp/for-hcp-tipsheet-hpv.pdf>
- New #How I Recommend Videos: Tips for HPV provider recommendations
<https://www.cdc.gov/hpv/hcp/how-i-recommend.html>
- Recommending HPV Vaccine Successfully
https://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/810030?src=par_cdc_stm_mscpedt&faf=1
- HPV Vaccine CDC CE courses
<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/ed/hpv/index.html>
- Top 10 Tips for HPV Vaccination Success
<https://www.cdc.gov/hpv/downloads/Top10-improving-practice.pdf>
- Vaccination in Rural Communities
<https://www.cdc.gov/ruralhealth/vaccines/>

Continuing Education for Providers and Staff:

- CDC, You Are the Key to HPV-Cancer Prevention-2018 CME, expires 4/11/2020,
<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/ed/hpv/you-are-key-2018.html>
- Postgraduate Institute for Medicine and the National AHEC Organization, Human Papillomavirus Vaccine (HPV) Safety CME, expires 2/25/2020,
<https://www.cmeuniversity.com/course/disclaimer/117724>
- Indiana Immunization Coalition, Someone You Love, The HPV Epidemic, CME, CNE, and PharmCE, <https://www.hpvepidemic.com/cme>
- ADPH, You Are the Key to HPV Cancer Prevention CEU
 - Offered by ADPH Staff
 - Course offers 1 contact credit hour
 - To schedule, please complete request online,
<https://www.adph.org/Extranet/Forms/Form.asp?ss=s&formID=7585>, or call 1-800-469-4599

References

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2. Alabama Study Commission for Gynecologic Cancers. (March 5, 2019). Retrieved from <http://images.pcmac.org/Uploads/LauraCrandallBrown/LauraCrandallBrown/SubDepartments/DocumentsCategories/Documents/Alabama%20Study%20Commission%20for%20Gynecologic%20Cancers%20-%20Final%20Report%20-%20March%202019%7BSIS14F35AFD8073%7D.pdf>
3. Johnson, T. (March 28, 2019). Be Aware of Cancer Risks During April, Oral Cancer Awareness Month. Retrieved from <http://media.alabama.gov/pr/pr.aspx?id=13224&t=1>
4. Alabama Counties with Adolescent Vaccine Rates Significantly Below the State Average. Retrieved from <http://www.alabamapublichealth.gov/Immunization/assets/2019-03-13AdolescentVaccineRatesPercentbyCounty.pdf>
5. Alabama Department of Public Health Immunization Registry, ImmPRINT. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://siis.state.al.us/immprint/Login/Login.aspx>
6. Alabama Department of Public Health unpublished study based on Board of Medical Examiners, Census, Medicaid, and VFC Program data to determine access and equality for VFC-eligible children compared to the general population of children.
7. Kempe, A., Markowitz, L.E., & Meites, E. (December 16, 2016). Use of a 2-Dose Schedule for Human Papillomavirus Vaccination — Updated Recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, 65(49). Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/65/wr/mm6549a5.htm>
8. Immunization Quality Improvement Tools, <https://www.hpviq.org/>
9. National HPV Round Table, <http://hpvroundtable.org/>