



WEBINAR: Vaccine Access & Guidance



CALHHS CONNECT:

How Federal Policy Changes are Impacting a Healthy California for All

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 2025



WEBINAR TOPIC

Vaccine Access and Guidance

Heading into respiratory virus season, Californians deserve clear, science-based recommendations and access to immunizations to protect themselves from vaccine-preventable disease. Learn about the changes to state law to maintain insurance coverage and ensure access to vaccines across pharmacies, clinics, and other health care providers.

SPEAKERS



KIM JOHNSON

Secretary,
California Health &
Human Services
Agency



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Director & State Public
Health Officer,
California Department
of Public Health



MARY WATANABE

Director,
California Department
of Managed
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CA Public Health updates

Dr. Erica Pan , MD, MPH, FIDSA, FAAP
(she/her)
California State Public Health Officer
Director, CDPH
State Epidemiologist

UCSF Clinical Professor
Pediatric Infectious Diseases

Updated as of September 22, 2025

West Coast Health Alliance (WCHA)

- [West Coast Health Alliance to uphold scientific integrity in public health](#)
- Goals:
 - Focus on evidence-based recommendations from respected national professional organizations
 - Coordination to reduce confusion and increase trust
 - Align across states
 - Not intended to replicate other national prior or current in-depth reviews of evidence to recommendations
- Venue for coordination of programmatic & implementation efforts
 - Partnerships with pharmacies and other providers
 - Sharing of tools

CA Laws relevant to ACIP Recommendations (pre AB144)

Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices

School Entry Requirements

- Certain vaccine required by law for schools & child care
- Medical Exemptions reference ACIP, AAP, & AAFP

Pharmacist Vaccination

- MD order not needed if age ≥ 3 Y, vaccine authorized by FDA & recommended by ACIP
- Major provider of flu and COVID-19 vaccines

Specific Settings & Populations

- SNF Standing orders for flu and pneumococcal vaccines ≥ 50 yo
- CalWorks recipients awareness/education

Insurance Coverage

- Medi-Cal
- Private Plans
- Disability Plans

Vaccine Guidance and AB 144

- New state law establishes CDPH as the source for immunizations and preventive services guidelines based on medical organizations
- Baseline recommendations ACIP and USPSTF 1/1/25
- CDPH can issue updates as needed
 - Future FDA or ACIP changes
 - USPSTF changes
- California regulated health plans are required to cover these immunizations and services
- Provide liability protection to providers who administer vaccines based on CDPH recommendations




Additional vaccine coverage provisions under AB 144

- A pharmacist may independently initiate and administer an immunization that was ACIP-recommended on January 1, 2025, or is currently recommended by CDPH, to persons age 3 years or older
- Aligns coverage requirements for commercial plans with ACIP recommendations as of January 1, 2025, or any subsequent modification by CDPH.
- State law currently provides a pharmacist with the authority to administer immunizations pursuant to a protocol with a prescriber.
- CDPH recommendations cover COVID vaccine for anyone who wants protection, state law does not require an attestation for pharmacists to administer to anyone 3+ years.

Immunization Provider Liability Protections under AB 144

- Persons prescribing, dispensing, ordering, furnishing, or administering vaccines shall not be liable for any injury, including residual effects of the vaccine if:
 - Vaccines are given in accordance with CDPH recommendations
 - Given as part of a public health outreach program
- Sunsets January 1, 2030

CDPH/ WCHA Recommendations

Age/Condition	COVID-19	Influenza	RSV
Children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All 6-23 months • All 2-18 years with risk factors or never vaccinated against COVID-19 • All who are in close contact with others with risk factors¹ • All who choose protection¹ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All 6 months and older 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All younger than 8 months² • All 8-19 months with risk factors
Pregnancy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All who are planning pregnancy, pregnant, postpartum or lactating 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All who are planning pregnancy, pregnant, postpartum or lactating 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 32-36 weeks gestational age²
Adults 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All 65 years and older • All younger than 65 years with risk factors • All who are in close contact with others with risk factors • All who choose protection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All 75 years and older • All 50-74 years with risk factors

Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP)

- Recent actions to replace committee raise questions about commitment to evidence-based recommendations
- Committee meeting last week
 - Combined MMRV vaccine
 - Removed as an option for 1st dose (12-18 mos)
 - Most providers vaccinate separately at 1st dose
 - Removes parental choice
 - Hepatitis B – vote deferred
 - COVID-19
 - Still recommended for all 6 mos+ - with shared clinical decision making
 - Broader than FDA recs

Estimated Coverage of Respiratory Vaccines, U.S.

	Vaccine coverage estimate (CDC-NIS)
Seasonal influenza vaccine	49.2% (children) 46.7% (adults 18+) 48.3% (adults 65+)*^
Updated COVID-19 vaccine	13% (children) 23% (adults 18+) 27.8% (adults 65+)^
RSV vaccine, adults 75+ (ever received)	47.5%

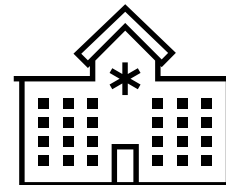
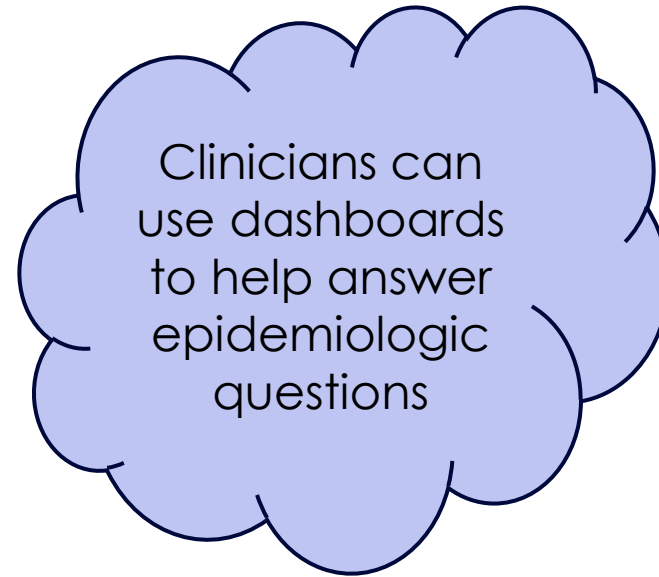
CDC-NIS vaccine coverage estimates available [here](#). California estimates are similar to U.S. estimates.

Data as of 4/26/25 (*2/22/25).

^Limited to Medicare fee-for-service beneficiaries enrolled in Part D, from CMS claims data.

Stay up to date with CDPH Dashboards

- [CDPH Respiratory Virus Surveillance Dashboard](#)
- [CDPH Cal-SuWers Wastewater Surveillance Dashboard](#)
- [CalCAT Dashboard](#)



Where are we in the current resp season? Is it worse than in previous years?

Is it getting better or worse?

Are people getting sick enough to seek treatment?

Are people being hospitalized?

DIVISION OF COMMUNICABLE DISEASE CONTROL

Key Takeaways and next steps

- Assembly Bill 144 helps to ensure
 - Vaccine recommendations continue to be based on expert guidance
 - Insurance coverage continues for vaccines that are safe and effective
 - Immunizers can continue to administer & have liability protections
- Next Steps:
 - Continue to track ACIP and other federal actions
 - Continue to partner with WCHA
 - Update California recommendations as needed
 - Send out healthcare provider communication
- Upcoming meetings with
 - Pharmacies
 - Public Health for All Californians Together (PHACT) Coalition
 - Private & Public healthcare systems, insurers, CA professional orgs, academic partners, local public health, etc.

Contact Information

- Stay informed:
 - [Subscribe to CDPH Policy Alerts](#)
 - [Subscribe to CDPH Communications Tools and Newsletter](#)
 - [Guidance and Policy Inquiry Submission Portal](#)
- Follow & share on social media (next slide)

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YouTube: [CA Public Health - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCaPbUcHtHtHtHtHtHtHtHtHt)



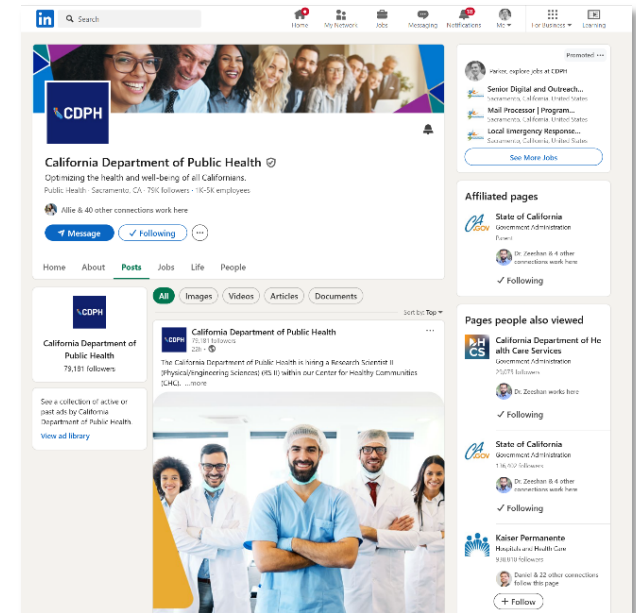
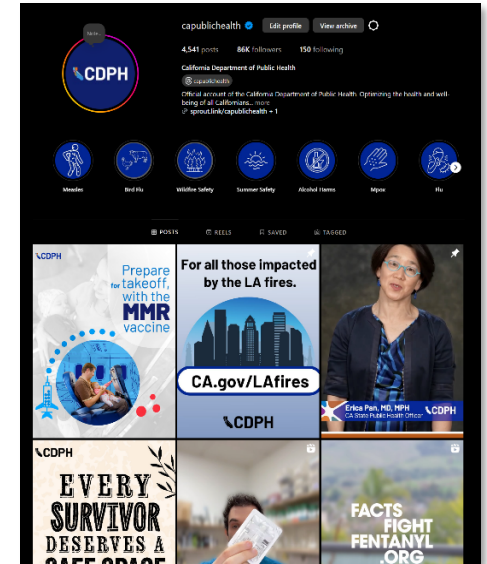
Threads: [@CAPublicHealth](https://www.threads.net/@CAPublicHealth)



BlueSky: [@capublichealth.bsky.social](https://bsky.app/profile/capublichealth.bsky.social)



TikTok: [@capublichealth](https://www.tiktok.com/@capublichealth) - **NEW!**



Other Resources

- [Your Local Epidemiologist – California](#)
- [American Academy of Pediatrics "Fact Checked"](#)
- [Children's Hospital of Philadelphia - Vaccine Education Center](#)
- [Vaccine Integrity Project](#)
- [Common Health Coalition Vaccine Resources](#)



California Department of Managed Health Care (DMHC)

Mary Watanabe, Director

DMHC Mission Statement

The mission of the Department of Managed Health Care (DMHC) is to ensure health plan members have access to equitable, high-quality, timely, and affordable health care within a stable health care delivery system.

Health Plan Coverage Requirements

Health plans / health insurers licensed by the DMHC / CDI must cover preventive care items and services, including immunizations, with **NO** cost-sharing or utilization management (prior authorization), if:

- Recommended by existing federal bodies as of January 1, 2025
- Recommended by CDPH

Health Plan Coverage Requirements (2)



Under CA law, health plan members have the right to COVID-19 tests, vaccines & treatment with no cost-sharing.

DMHC Resources

- DMHC [Know Your Health Care Rights Fact Sheet on COVID-19 Tests, Vaccines & Treatment](#) includes important information on health plan coverage requirements.
- DMHC [All Plan Letter 25-015](#) summarizes new requirements under AB 144 & highlights recent recommendations by CDPH regarding immunizations to protect against COVID19, RSV, and influenza.
- Visit www.DMHC.ca.gov & follow us on Social Media for current information and resources.

DMHC Help Center



Medi-Cal Vaccine Coverage Updates

- **Medi-Cal will cover vaccines recommended by any of the following:**

- Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP)
- American Academy of Pediatrics
- American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
- American Academy of Family Physicians
- California Department of Public Health (CDPH)



- Medi-Cal will continue to cover COVID-19 vaccinations for all persons age 6 months or older
- Vaccines for Children (VFC) only covers vaccines that are ACIP-recommended
- Medi-Cal will cover childhood vaccines outside of VFC if recommended by any of the trusted medical societies I mentioned, or CDPH.
- A California pharmacist may independently initiate and administer an immunization that was ACIP-recommended on January 1, 2025, or is currently recommended by CDPH, to persons age 3 years or older. Medi-Cal will continue to cover vaccines administered by pharmacists.



QUESTIONS

chhs.ca.gov