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## Strategies to Improve Coverage of Immunization Rates in Houston/Harris County

Houston/Harris County currently has over 325,000 children less than 5 years of age – almost approximately 76,000 of them are not age-appropriately vaccinated, leaving them potentially susceptible to serious and often life-threatening vaccine-preventable diseases. The following five (5) strategies are proven and successful approaches that both private and public providers can undertake to increase immunization rates in children:

### 1. Reduce Immunization Record Fragmentation

- Enroll in an Immunization Registry
  - Houston-Harris County Immunization Registry ([www.hhcir.org](http://www.hhcir.org))
  - State of Texas Immunization Registry ([www.immtrac.com](http://www.immtrac.com))
- Use the registry to look up records of each child before immunizing to avoid administering unnecessary shots; record into the registry all shots administered

### 2. Immunize On Time, Every Time

- Check patients' immunization status at every visit; give all needed immunizations simultaneously; follow only true contraindications
- Follow the Minimum Interval Catch-up Immunization Schedule for children who are behind ([www.cdc.gov/nip/recs/child-schedule.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/nip/recs/child-schedule.htm))
- Administer the birth dose of hepatitis B vaccine universally

### 3. Remind and Recall All Children Needing Immunizations

- Use letters, postcards and/or phone calls to remind parents to bring children in when immunizations are due and to recall parents when shots are overdue. Both the state and local immunization registries include mechanisms to perform reminder/recall

### 4. Participate in the CDC National Immunization Survey (NIS)

- Fully complete the NIS questionnaires that are sent to providers to verify immunizations given to surveyed parents. The Houston Department of Health and Human Services (HDHHS) and Harris County Public Health and Environmental Services (HCPHES) can assist providers in completing the questionnaire by searching multiple sources and conducting home visits to obtain the most completed copy of the child's immunization record
- Contact Maureen Moore, HDHHS Registry Coordinator (713-794-9262, [maureen.moore@cityofhouston.net](mailto:maureen.moore@cityofhouston.net)) or Lois Austin, HCPHES Immunization Program Coordinator (713-439-6113, [laustin@hcpbes.org](mailto:laustin@hcpbes.org))

### 5. Ensure Vaccines are Affordable

- Enroll in the Texas Vaccines for Children Program (VFC), which provides vaccine at no cost to providers in order to immunize children who meet certain eligibility requirements ([www.dshs.state.tx.us/immunize/tvfc/](http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/immunize/tvfc/))
  - HCPHES and HDHHS administer VFC in Houston/Harris County