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VACCINES FOR CHILDREN PROGRAM (VFC)

On August 10, 1993, Congress passed the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (OBRA), creating the Vaccines for Children (VFC) Program. VFC became operational October 1, 1994. Known as section 1928 of the Social Security Act, the Vaccines for Children program is an entitlement program (a right granted by law) for eligible children, age 18 and younger. The Vaccines for Children (VFC) Program helps provide vaccines to children whose parents or guardians may not be able to afford them. This helps ensure that all children have a better chance of getting their recommended vaccinations on schedule. Vaccines available through the VFC Program are those recommended by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practice (ACIP).

The CDC buys vaccines and distributes them to grantees (i.e., state health departments and certain local and territorial public health agencies) which in turn distribute them at no charge to those private physicians' offices and public health clinics registered as VFC providers. A child is eligible for the VFC Program if he or she is younger than 19 years of age and is one of the following:

- Medicaid-eligible
- Uninsured
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Underinsured- i.e. insurance;
 - Doesn't cover vaccines, or
 - Doesn't cover certain vaccines, or
 - Covers vaccines but has a fixed dollar limit or cap for vaccines. Once that fixed dollar amount is reached, a child is then eligible.
- Underinsured children are eligible to receive vaccines only at Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC) or Rural Health Clinics (RHC).

Children whose health insurance covers the cost of vaccinations are not eligible for VFC vaccines, even when a claim for the cost of the vaccine and its administration would be denied for payment by the insurance carrier because the plan's deductible had not been met.

There is no charge for any vaccines given by a VFC provider to eligible children. But there can be some other costs with a vaccination:

- Doctors can charge a set (or standard) fee to administer each shot. But if the family can't afford the fee per shot, the fee must be excused. A VFC-eligible child cannot be refused a vaccination due to the parent's or guardian's inability to pay for shot administration.
- There can be a fee for the office visit.
- There can be fees for non-vaccine services, like an eye exam or blood test.

For more information about the Vaccines for Children Program please visit:

<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/programs/vfc/parents/ga-detailed.html>