

Frequently asked questions

Communicable Disease Control, Immunization Program, Provincial Partner Oversight Team

The Alberta Health Services (AHS) Provincial Partner Oversight (PPO) Team supports seniors congregate care facilities in providing outreach immunizations. Currently, this includes influenza and COVID-19 immunization for residents and staff, as well as pneumococcal and Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) immunization to eligible residents. The PPO Team operates under the AHS Communicable Disease Control (CDC) Program and is staffed by Registered Nurses with expertise in immunization.

Supporting outreach immunization in seniors congregate care facilities

What are the responsibilities of the PPO Team?

- Collaborate with seniors congregate care facilities to ensure residents and staff have access to outreach immunization services.
- Support facilities with establishing immunization providers which may include in-house providers (such as appropriately trained RN/LPN staff employed by the facility) or other community providers (such as pharmacies).
- Provide Alberta Health with information collected from facilities to facilitate vaccine allocations. This can include information on immunization provider(s), number of residents and staff (including age over or under 65 years).
- Provide support and direction to facilities prior to and during the Outreach Immunization Program.

Which congregate care facilities are eligible for the Alberta Outreach Immunization Program?

- The Alberta Outreach Immunization Program supports the following seniors congregate care facilities that have more than 10 beds:
 - Type A Continuing Care Home (CCH) (previously known as Long-term Care)
 - Type B CCH (previously known as Designated Supportive Living)
 - Supportive Living (previously known as Non-Designated Supportive Living)

What is the role of congregate care facility operators and facility staff?

- Ensure immunization services are offered to residents and staff.
- Complete and submit the AHS PPO Outreach Immunization Survey within specified timelines.

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- The [Alberta Outreach Immunization Program policy](#) further defines the facility's roles and responsibilities.

Note: According to this policy, immunization services must be offered to residents and staff for the full duration of the outreach program. At a minimum, immunization services would be offered at least 3 times prior to and during the peak of influenza activity.

What about outreach immunizations for congregate care staff?

- Operators are encouraged to make outreach immunizations available to all staff such as frontline nursing, housekeeping, office administrative, dietary, maintenance as well as anyone else who works in the congregate care facility.
- Facilities will be required to complete the Survey. In the Survey, facilities need to provide total number of staff (divided into 65 years of age and older and 64 years of age and younger) who are eligible for outreach immunizations.

Is there any cost associated with providers offering vaccines at a facility?

- Facilities should enquire with their immunization provider whether there is any fee associated with their service.
- COVID-19, influenza, pneumococcal and RSV vaccines are provincially funded vaccines for those that meet the eligibility requirements.

How will information be gathered about who will be immunizing in our facility?

- The Survey is used to gather the required information. The designated main contact for your facility will receive a unique survey link by email.
- Please ensure a staff member, who is familiar with both the survey process and the needs of your residents and staff, is available to complete this Survey.
- Update the PPO Team if there are any changes to your designated main contact by emailing congregatelivingimmsupport@albertahealthservices.ca

When is the deadline to submit the PPO Outreach Immunization Survey to the PPO Team?

- Facilities **must** submit the completed Survey to the PPO Team with their provider information and required doses for both staff and residents by the date indicated in the Survey.

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- This deadline ensures appropriate allocation and distribution of vaccine doses across the province. It also provides time to plan immunization services if a facility requires support in securing an appropriate immunization provider.

Who do we contact if we have questions regarding the Outreach Immunization Program?

- For resources, guidance, and clinical questions, contact the PPO Team at congregatelivingimmsupport@albertahealthservices.ca or 1-855-444-2324.

Immunization information

Are there resources to assist with organizing a successful clinic at a facility?

- The following helpful resources are on the [PPO webpage](#):
 - Facility Using In-House Immunization Providers
 - Facility Using Community Immunization Providers
- Facilities can also contact the PPO Team at: congregatelivingimmsupport@albertahealthservices.ca or 1-855-444-2324 for additional support.

How do we access vaccines if we are an in-house immunization provider?

- Facilities that have previously used in-house providers will follow the same process used in previous years.
- To order influenza and COVID-19 vaccine, use the online Vaccine Inventory Management System-Alberta Vaccine Inventory System (VIMS-AVI). Vaccine orders will only be accepted through the VIMS-AVI system. Please visit [VIMS-AVI Main Page](#).
- Facilities that want to provide immunization for the first time using in-house LPNs/RNs should contact congregatelivingimmsupport@albertahealthservices.ca to begin the process as soon as possible. The facility must register as an immunization provider before they can order and receive publicly funded vaccine. This process can take 1-2 months.

Who do we contact if we have problems with our vaccine supply?

- If you are working with a community pharmacy or other community provider for outreach immunization services, please reach out to them directly with any questions.
- If you are immunizing your own residents and staff, reach out to your [Zone Contact](#).
- If you have VIMS-AVI access and are having trouble ordering more vaccine or your order has been declined, reach out to your [Zone Contact](#). Vaccine orders will not be

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filled if there are outstanding orders that need to be received by your facility or vaccine doses that need to be reconciled.

- Refer to the VIMS-AVI Log In page to find information on the required frequency for reconciliation of vaccines.
- The User Guides and Training section on the [VIMS-AVI website](#) provides training on how to complete reconciliation.

How do we document immunizations given to residents or staff?

- It is the responsibility of whomever administered the immunization to document the immunization event.
- Document each resident and staff's immunization event as per your facility's processes. If you are an AHS facility, this may be through Connect Care.
- If your facility does not have an EMR that reports to the Provincial Immunization Repository (Imm/AR), use the [Immunization Direct Submission Mechanism \(IDSM\)](#).
- Immunization reporting **must be submitted electronically** to the Provincial Immunization Repository (Imm/ARI) **no later than 7 days** after the immunization. Refer to the requirements outlined in the [Immunization Regulation](#) and [Alberta Immunization Policy](#).

What is IDSM?

- Immunization Direct Submission Mechanism (IDSM) is a stand-alone web application developed and operated by Alberta Health.
- IDSM facilitates the electronic submission of the immunization and assessment event information from health practitioners to the provincial immunization repository (Imm/ARI) through a web browser.
- A user must complete an IDSM User Registration form and be authorized by a health practitioner to obtain access to IDSM.
- Please refer to: [Netcare Learning Centre \(albertanetcare.ca\)](#)
- To learn more about IDSM, use the links below:
 - [User Training Materials](#)
 - [Access and User Registration](#)
 - [Netcare FAQ](#)
- If you need additional assistance, please contact the eHealth Netcare Support Services Team at: 1-855-643-8649, ehealthsupport@cgi.com or contact health.imm@gov.ab.ca, indicating IDSM questions in the subject line.

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How should a vaccine administration error be reported?

- AHS facilities report vaccine administration errors to their supervisor and complete an AHS Reporting & Learning System for Patient Safety Report (RLS). AHS staff can find the RLS icon by looking on the right-hand column of the Insite Homepage.
- Non-AHS facilities follow their own internal processes for vaccine administration errors.
- If there are questions about whether reimmunization is required, please reach out to your [Zone Contact](#) or the PPO Team at Congregatelivingimmsupport@albertahealthservices.ca.

How do we report an Adverse Event Following Immunization (AEFI)?

- All unexpected reactions must be reported to the AHS AEFI team. Reporting unexpected reactions must occur **within 3 days** of the health practitioner determining or being informed that a resident or staff has had an unreported AEFI.
- Health practitioners who become aware of an AEFI are responsible to report to AHS:
 - Connect Care users – complete the AEFI Report Form in Connect Care.
 - Non-Connect Care users – complete and submit the Online at [Adverse Event Following Immunization Reporting](#)
 - If unable to complete online, call **1-855-444-2324** (1-855-444-CDCI)
- Additional information on AEFIs can be found at [Adverse Events Following Immunization \(AEFI\) policy for Alberta immunization providers](#)

How do we report a cold chain excursion?

- A cold chain excursion (CCE) or 'break' is reported when vaccines have been exposed to light, when vaccine is exposed to temperatures outside of the recommended range, or temperatures have not been documented. A CCE can reduce the effectiveness of the vaccine.
- Registered vaccine providers storing vaccines at a facility must report all CCEs or light exposures. Use the process outlined under the Cold Chain Excursion Reporting tab on the [AHS Vaccine Storage and Handling webpage](#).
- Pharmacy immunization providers should refer to Alberta Health Vaccine Storage and Handling policy.

What should be done with vaccine at the end of the Outreach Immunization program?

- To prevent excess wastage, it is important to only order what you need. Vaccine cannot be returned once distributed to facilities.
- Keep all vaccine in appropriate cold chain until the end of the Outreach Immunization Program, which will end approximately March or until the vaccine expires, whichever comes first.

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- Information will be sent out to all immunization providers at the end of the Outreach Immunization Program, which is approximately the end of March. Instructions on how to manage remaining COVID-19 and influenza vaccine can be found on the [VIMS-AVI login page](#).
- Health practitioners are responsible for the proper disposal of unused/expired COVID-19 and influenza vaccine according to the standards of practice at their respective facilities. The cost of disposal will not be reimbursed.
- Any COVID-19 and influenza vaccine remaining at the end of the seasonal immunization outreach season must be accounted for and reconciled in AVI using the Category Code= “Wasted” and the Reason Code = “Wasted /Influenza Season End”.

Additional Resources

All health practitioners should review the following resources prior to the outreach immunization season.

- [Influenza Immunization for Health Professionals | Alberta Health Services](#)
- [COVID-19 Health Professional Immunization Information | Alberta Health Services](#)
- [Pneumococcal Conjugate | Alberta Health Services](#)
- [Respiratory Syncytial Virus \(RSV\) Immunization | Alberta Health Services](#)

For more information and resources for seniors congregate care outreach immunization, contact the PPO team at:

- Congregatelivingimmsupport@albertahealthservices.ca
- 1-855-444-2324
- [PPO webpage](#)