



2015 Legislative Session **Universal Vaccine Purchase in New Mexico**

Goal

To ensure New Mexico maintains the universal vaccine purchase status it has benefited from for 20 years.

Background

New Mexico is one of only six states with one central purchasing mechanism for all vaccines for children 0-18 years of age, and has been since the beginning of the federal Vaccines for Children (VFC) Program in 1994 [<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/programs/vfc/index.html>]. This is important because it reduces potential barriers to access, and over the past decade New Mexico has risen from near the bottom of national rankings in immunization coverage to 17th in 2012 (for 19-35 month-olds).

Universal Purchasing means that in addition to VFC vaccines (children on Medicaid, uninsured or Native Americans), the New Mexico Department of Health (DOH) also purchases vaccines for insured children – at a cost of approximately \$8 million per year. The problem is that revenues to support this activity are only about \$4.5 million annually. Not all insurance companies reimburse the State for the vaccines their insured children receive. While the Insurance Code requires insurers to cover immunizations, there is no mandate for them to reimburse the state for the vaccines it purchases. All other states with Universal Purchasing have such a legislative mandate. This year the Centers for Disease Control promulgated new, stronger rules restricting vaccine use by funding source. If New Mexico does not find a way to raise the revenues to support this program, it will have to end within a matter of months.

Proposal

Legislation would establish a statewide universal vaccine purchasing program in the Department of Health and create a vaccine purchasing fund in the state Treasury. The fund would consist of assessments determined by the Superintendent of Insurance and paid by health insurers based on the percentage of eligible children they insure. The fund would be appropriated to the Department of Health and used only for the purchase, storage, and distribution of vaccines for insured children who are not eligible for the vaccines for children program.

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