



# Support Childhood Vaccines: Pandemic and Beyond

Strengthen the Vaccines for Children (VFC) program to protect children and their communities from preventable illness during the pandemic and beyond

## Routine Childhood Vaccinations Are Down

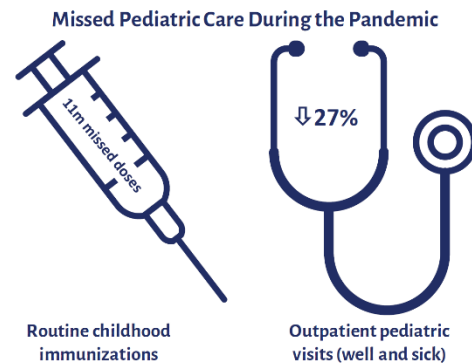
- Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, routine childhood vaccination rates are down, with 11 million fewer vaccine orders in the VFC program compared to the same period last year. Lower immunization rates raise the very real possibility of a secondary outbreak of an infectious disease.
- School communities are particularly vulnerable to outbreaks of measles, mumps and whooping cough when too few students are vaccinated. It is imperative that children are caught up on their recommended vaccines to ensure that schools reopen safely.

## Pediatric Visits Are Down Overall

- Pediatric outpatient visits are down about 27% compared to a pre-pandemic baseline, reflecting missed well-child visits and causing financial strain for pediatric providers. This financial strain exacerbates the challenge of historically low Medicaid payment rates, including for administering vaccines.
- While missed vaccinations are worrisome by themselves, missed visits to pediatric offices also results in missed opportunities for preventive counseling, to identify mental health concerns, and to diagnose conditions that can respond to intervention.

## The Vaccines for Children Program

- The Vaccines for Children program (VFC) provides federally purchased vaccines to approximately 50% of children in the United States, including children who are enrolled in Medicaid or who are uninsured or underinsured. It is an essential program for the delivery of vaccines to children.
- Created in 1993, the VFC program needs modernization to adapt to the immunization landscape of 2021 and to address barriers that prevent pediatricians and other providers from participating.
- Given its reach, the VFC program is the best foundation for building surge capacity to address gaps in childhood immunizations.



## The Bipartisan *Strengthening the Vaccines for Children Program Act of 2021* Makes Needed Improvements

### Builds Surge Capacity

- Provides incentive payments up to \$10,000 for VFC participation over two years to cover costs like purchasing separate fridges or hosting parking lot vaccine clinics.
- Raises Medicaid vaccine administration payment to Medicare levels for two years and gives states an increased federal match to cover these costs.

### Makes Long-Term Program Improvements

- Extends eligibility to children enrolled in the Children's Health Insurance Program, streamlining program administration.
- Ensures Medicaid can pay appropriately for administration and counseling of modern, multi-component vaccines.
- Allows children to receive VFC vaccines in their medical home.
- Requires new CDC reporting to identify disparities and pockets of low vaccination rates.

### The AAP urges you to:

Co-sponsor H.R. 2347, the bipartisan *Strengthening the Vaccines for Children Program Act of 2021*.

Co-sponsor similar legislation in the Senate, soon to be introduced by Sen. Jack Reed (R.I.).