

Parents of Insured Children Will be Responsible for Vaccine Costs

Federal stimulus money the Department of Health and Welfare (DHW) had anticipated using to purchase children's vaccines is less than projected, with DHW now moving forward with its original plan of having families with insurance coverage being responsible for their children's vaccinations. Beginning July 1st, insured families will be required to pay insurance deductibles and copays for their children's vaccines.

In January, DHW had proposed eliminating state vaccine purchases for children who have insurance coverage. When the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act was announced in February, it appeared Idaho would receive stimulus money that could be used for vaccine purchases. With this federal money, the program planned to delay the proposed reduction for one year.

This week, DHW learned that federal stimulus dollars are less than projected. Because of this, the State will not be able to provide vaccines for insured children 0-18 years of age. The State will continue to provide vaccines for children who meet the Vaccines for Children (VFC) eligibility criteria. VFC eligibility includes children enrolled in Medicaid, those who are Alaska Native or Native American, and children who have no health insurance or whose health insurance does not cover vaccines. A majority of Idaho's children are considered VFC eligible.

With this change, the Idaho Immunization Program plans to work closely with healthcare providers to help them transition to a new system in which they will be responsible for independently ordering vaccines and billing healthcare insurance for vaccinations. The program also will continue to evaluate additional funding options for future years.