

COVID-19 Immunization Information System Frequently Asked Questions

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What is an immunization information system (IIS)?

An IIS, also known as an immunization registry, is a confidential, computerized database that records all immunization doses administered to patients by health care providers. IISs are operational in all 50 states. The New Hampshire Immunization Information System (NHIS) was recently implemented and is being used initially for COVID-19 vaccine tracking. It will eventually be used for all vaccines administered to children and adults in New Hampshire.

Why are immunization information systems important?

A statewide IIS will serve as a central location to coordinate and promote cost-effective disease prevention and control efforts by patients, families and health care providers in New Hampshire. The system allows health care providers to see which immunizations a patient has already been given and which ones are needed, regardless of where the patient received vaccine. The IIS will also provide individuals a complete and accurate record of their immunization record. These systems help to sustain high immunization coverage and low vaccine preventable disease rates in addition to more efficient management of immunization information.

For COVID-19 vaccine distribution, it is critical that the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services (NH DHHS) track every dose of vaccine provided to ensure that individuals are called back to receive their second dose and to monitor and ensure adequate vaccination coverage in the state as we work to end the pandemic.

How is New Hampshire's new immunization information system being used to track COVID-19 vaccine?

Because NHIS is new and only recently available, NH DHHS is using the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Vaccine Administration Management System (VAMs) for the initial phases of COVID-19 vaccine distribution. This system was specifically designed for the tracking of COVID-19 vaccine. This system is being used to schedule persons for COVID-19 vaccination clinics and to remind them when their next vaccine dose is due. It also provides information to NH DHHS on who has received vaccine to inform the vaccine distribution effort. Healthcare organizations that receive COVID-19 vaccine are required to provide vaccine administration information to VAMs. The data within VAMs is also stored in NHIS. In later phases of vaccine distribution, NH DHHS will transition to using a different system for vaccine registration and scheduling with data being stored in the NHIS.

If I do not receive the COVID-19 vaccine, will my personal information be collected?

No. If you do not receive the COVID-19 vaccine, your personal information will not be collected in NHIS.

When a person receives their COVID-19 vaccine, what data is collected and why?

CDC requires vaccination providers receiving COVID-19 vaccine to report certain demographic and vaccine dose data elements for each dose administered within 24 hours of administration. This includes: patient name, date of birth, gender, race, ethnicity, address, vaccine name, manufacturer, lot number and the date the vaccine was administered. NH DHHS needs this information to ensure proper administration of the 2nd dose of COVID-19 vaccine to recipients and to monitor vaccine coverage in our community. The data will also help NH DHHS order and distribute vaccines for our citizens and ensure fidelity to the phased allocation of limited vaccine.

Am I required to share my information with the immunization information system if I receive the COVID-19 vaccine?

Yes. If you receive COVID-19 vaccine, sharing of your patient-level vaccine administration information with NH DHHS is required by the Federal Government. [Emergency Order #76](#) brings the State into compliance with Federal requirements by requiring health care providers receiving doses of the COVID-19 vaccine to participate in the NHIS and requires that all patient-level information relating to COVID-19 vaccine administration be stored in the NHIS. The order also temporarily suspends an individual's right to opt-out or withdraw from the NHIS, for COVID-19 vaccine information only. This order pertains only to the sharing of vaccine information and is not related in any way to someone's right to refuse being vaccinated for COVID-19.

Is the Federal Government requiring New Hampshire to collect Covid-19 vaccine data and implement the provisions specified in Emergency Order 76?

Yes. The CDC and FDA currently require states to collect certain information for every person who receives a COVID-19 vaccine and the provisions of Emergency Order #76 bring the State into compliance with Federal requirements. The CDC and FDA have stated two primary reasons for these requirements. First, the COVID-19 vaccines require two doses, so states need to keep track of individuals receiving vaccinations to ensure each person that receives an initial dose receives the second dose of the same vaccine on the proper timeline.

As an example, it is important that states make sure that someone does not get the first dose of the Pfizer vaccine followed by a dose of the Moderna vaccine, as opposed to getting the two doses they need of the same vaccine. With so many individuals getting the vaccines quickly, the Federal Government is requiring states to keep track of this information.

The second reason is that these vaccines have been approved through an emergency use authorization (EUA). This is an unprecedented situation because these are the first vaccines approved through an EUA that are also being distributed nationwide for a mass vaccination. States are therefore being required to keep track of who is getting each vaccine to monitor vaccine safety and efficacy.

Therefore, the FDA and the CDC are requiring states to take the actions that Governor Sununu took in issuing Emergency Order #76. New Hampshire designed its order narrowly to come into compliance with Federal requirements while ensuring that immunization information is kept confidential and is stored securely. Had the state not issued Emergency Order #76, New Hampshire might not have been able to get our vaccine allotment.

Where does COVID-19 vaccine data get stored?

While VAMs is in use, patient COVID-19 vaccine information is stored in the VAMs database on protected servers. NH DHHS and the healthcare organization that administered the vaccine are the only entities that have access to the confidential information contained in VAMs. The data will also be stored in NHIS.

How will my information be protected?

State law and Federal privacy rules and regulations require that immunization information be kept confidential and stored securely. Only you, NH DHHS, your doctor, or healthcare workers who can assist you have access to the information. Your immunization data is stored in a secure database that can only be accessed by authorized users. These users must sign an agreement and follow strict confidentiality and security policies. Information in VAMs and NHIS is held under the same strict security and confidentiality measures that other health care data systems require, much like a health care provider's electronic medical record. These systems were designed with multiple security controls in place to protect immunization information and patient confidentiality.

Can I remove my COVID-19 vaccine information at the end of the State of Emergency?

Yes, current law allows you to request removal of your information from NHIS when the State of Emergency expires. When this time comes, you will need to complete a request form and provide it to your healthcare provider. This form is not yet available but will be made available on the NH DHHS website when the State of Emergency expires.

Will my doctor be able to see my immunization records?

Yes, once we enroll all providers in NHIS, your doctor will have access to your immunization record in the future so that they can provide better medical care to you.

Additional resources:

- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)
- [NH DHHS COVID-19 Vaccine Information](#)