

# NEW YORK STATE OFFICE FOR THE AGING

2 Empire State Plaza, Albany, NY 12223-1251

David A. Paterson, Governor  
An Equal Opportunity Employer

Michael Burgess, Director

## INFORMATION MEMORANDUM

Number 08-IM-08

Supersedes

Expiration Date

**DATE:** September 8, 2008

**TO:** Area Agency on Aging Directors

**SUBJECT: Flu Vaccination Initiative**

.....

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of this Information Memorandum (IM) is to inform area agencies on aging (AAA) directors and preventive health staff about an initiative named “Vote and Vax.” This initiative is currently sponsored by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) and supported in the United States (US) through technical assistance by an organization known as Sickness Prevention Achieved through Regional Collaboration (SPARC). We urge you to replicate this initiative in your own county.

The purpose of “Vote and Vax” is to increase the rate of flu and pneumococcal vaccination by providing these shots at or nearby local polling places where voting occurs. The premise underlying this initiative is improving the health of the population through collaboration with other local stakeholders such as hospitals, diagnostic and treatment clinics, local health departments and other health and human service organizations.

Since a high voter turn-out is anticipated for this fall’s elections, this is an excellent time to implement or expand “Vote and Vax” at one or more polling places in your county. One data source, the New York State Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), has indicated that approximately 70.5 percent of New York’s population age 65 and older received a flu vaccination in 2007.

Source: <http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/BRFSS/list.asp?cat=IM&yr=2007&qkey=4407&state=All>

**BACKGROUND:** In the United States, mortality from influenza is the leading cause of death that can be prevented by a vaccine. During a one year period of time, the influenza virus has caused more than 36,000 deaths and 200,000 hospitalizations from influenza virus and its complications in the US. Please refer to your “Senior Health Check-Up” guide mailed to you in June to identify specific flu immunization rates for your county. While flu immunization rates are relatively high compared to other preventive health screening and related preventive services, and are likely underreported, New York State can increase the number of older people who receive their annual flu shot and a pneumococcal shot (usually once in a person’s lifetime).

Source: [www.immunize.org/askexperts/experts\\_inf.asp](http://www.immunize.org/askexperts/experts_inf.asp) (2008)

Recent public health planning guidance to local health departments list “Infectious Disease” as one of New York State’s top ten public health priorities. Flu shots are one of the priorities. The New York State Department of Health (DOH) identifies one public health indicator for local health departments as the percent of adults age 65+ who have had a flu shot within the past year. The New York State Prevention Agenda 2013 goal is 90 percent. The current New York State rate is 64.7 percent while the US rate is 69.9 percent (see IM # 08-IM-07 for more information on New York State Public Health Planning Guidance).

Reasons for “Vote and Vax” include:

- provide convenient locations for administration of the flu vaccine;
- increase awareness of the importance of flu vaccinations;
- educate the public about the roles and responsibilities of health departments and offices for the aging; and
- provide health literature, information, and linkages to other health providers.

Potential benefits of “Vote and Vax” include:

- reductions in illness and deaths;
- increasing accessibility to lifesaving public health functions; and
- making available flu shots for people who may not otherwise receive them.

The RWJF has helped organizations administer influenza vaccines to specific target populations on Election Day to test their effectiveness. Based on the results, it has contracted with the SPARC, a nonprofit organization in Connecticut that pioneered the “Vote and Vax” concept in 1997.

Previous “Vote and Vax” projects have been successful in many states such as Connecticut, Massachusetts, and New York. “Vote and Vax” projects have been carried out successfully in a number of states and are currently being considered in communities in five counties in New York State. The counties are – Essex, Tompkins, Lewis, Nassau and Yates. In Tompkins County, “Vote and Vax” has been implemented many times because of its high success rate. In 2007, almost 550 people were vaccinated in Tompkins County.

**IMPLEMENTATION:** NYSOFA has collaborated with DOH regarding the planning and implementation of the “Vote and Vax” program and DOH supports the program. At the local level, planning and coordinating is necessary to successfully implement a “Vote and Vax” program. AAA’s should work in collaboration with local health departments and other local providers such as Visiting Nurse Association, home health providers and mass immunizers. As with many program implementation initiatives, there are some challenges and considerations when implementing “Vote and Vax” in a community. These include:

- finding registered nurses to administer the flu vaccines;
- recruiting volunteers to assist in organizing “Vote and Vax”;

- securing funding for the flu vaccines, syringes, biohazard bins, coolers, ice, and other logistics needed in organizing this program; and
- advertising the availability of the program.

By working in collaboration with other local partners in your community it will be easier to address and respond to these issues. For example, local health departments have nurses on staff that can provide flu and pneumonia vaccines to individuals. Local Health Departments may also recruit student nurses through local schools of nursing. These student nurses can then work under the supervision of their instructor and with the local health departments to provide flu vaccinations. Permission from local election officials is also needed. Depending upon available funding for vaccine, a fee might be charged.

Please see the checklist attached for implementing “Vote and Vax” in your community.

Please see the link below to the RWJF website describing useful background information on their previous initiative on funding “Vote and Vax” in the US: Source:  
[www.rwjf.org/programareas/resources/grantsreport.jsp?filename=vote.htm&pid=1144...](http://www.rwjf.org/programareas/resources/grantsreport.jsp?filename=vote.htm&pid=1144...)

The website link noted below is specific to “Vote and Vax” and includes general information, information for clinic providers, elections officials and media information.  
 Source: <http://www.voteandvax.org/>

The website link noted below is the 2008 “Vote and Vax” technical assistance guide. The guide can assist you in setting up a successful clinic in your community.  
 Source: <http://www.voteandvax.org/PDF/TechnicalAssistanceGuide.pdf>

**PROGRAMS AFFECTED:**

- |  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Title III-B       | <input type="checkbox"/> Title III-C-1          | <input type="checkbox"/> Title III-C-2 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Title III-D       | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Title III-E | <input type="checkbox"/> CSE           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> EISEP             | <input type="checkbox"/> NSIP                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Title V       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SNAP              | <input type="checkbox"/> HIICAP                 | <input type="checkbox"/> LTCOP         |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other: |   |  |

**CONTACT PERSON:** Gary Malys

**TELEPHONE:** (518) 473-5705

## ATTACHMENT – CHECKLIST

The following is a helpful step-by-step checklist for how to organize a “Vote and Vax” clinic:

1. Download and read the 2008 “Vote and Vax” resource guide, *Setting Up a Successful Clinic*, a how-to manual for organizing flu vaccination clinics at polling places.
2. Identify and contact your local election authority.
3. Select the polling place(s) where you would like to hold your flu clinic.
4. Obtain signed approval from your local election authority to hold a flu clinic at local polling places. You must obtain signed approval for each polling site you select. Additional polling places can be added as planning and time permits; however, you must obtain and submit approval for each site.
5. Fax the approval form from your local election authority to the “Vote and Vax” program office at (860) 435–8193, and register to become an official local partner. (As a registered “Vote and Vax” partner, you’ll receive access to the special technical assistance section of the “Vote and Vax” Web site, including an opportunity to speak with a technical assistance specialist.)
6. Participate in “Vote and Vax” monthly technical assistance webinars and conference calls that will help you organize and promote your local “Vote and Vax” clinics.
7. In addition to this resource guide, download a copy of Promoting Your “Vote and Vax” Clinic, including templates for press releases and other customizable materials.
8. Register your local polling place flu clinic information for posting on the “Vote and Vax” Web site at [www.voteandvax.org](http://www.voteandvax.org). Community residents will be able to locate it from the Web site.
9. Conduct advance promotion of your “Vote and Vax” clinics.
10. Hold your “Vote and Vax” clinics.
11. Submit post-participation reports and evaluations.