

Primary care and other medical practices may choose to hold large vaccination clinics for their patients. Drive-thru strategies are a great way to vaccinate both parents and their children in a small amount of time and can accommodate support animals that may help kids with their anxiety about getting a shot. The Vermont Department of Health Immunization Program encourages coadministration of flu and COVID-19 vaccine for the 2021/2022 season and has many resources to assist you. For questions or to connect with resources, email

AHS.VDHImmunizationProgram@vermont.gov.

Essex Pediatrics is a large pediatric office located in Chittenden County. They ran drive-thru flu clinics during the 2020/2021 and 2021/2022 flu seasons to immunize both children and their families. Below are some lessons they learned.

Planning

Start planning early.

We formed a committee (nurses, front office, and billing) and had meetings during the summer. We knew there were a lot of logistics to think through and implement, like timing, advertising, planning for bad weather, researching various HIPAA compliant online scheduling platforms, and material acquisition (cones, tent, signage). We also decided on an age cut-off. We started with age 8 and lowered it to age 5, keeping it an independent age for quick administration. Ultimately with this planning, we were able to administer over 450 flu shots in a 6-hour clinic.

Pull a team together.

Size and responsibilities may vary depending on the practice. Teams benefit from having both nurses and administrative staff involved to cover everything from vaccine administration and monitoring to check-in and billing.



Cars line up to check-in for flu shots at a drive-thru clinic at Essex Pediatrics



Jill Kenneson of Essex Pediatrics administers a flu shot while the patient remains in the car

Tips for Drive-thru Vaccination Clinics

Preparing to vaccinate parents and caregivers.

If vaccinating parents, check that you're covered through your practice insurance. We used a HIPAA-approved online scheduling platform. The disclaimer states that patients and family members in the household can schedule appointments at the same time. When scheduling, it asks for date of birth, demographic, and insurance information. You can add medical history questions as well.

Our electronic health record (EHR) system automatically reports to the registry, and adding parents to our EHR database allows us to bill for administration.

Our best practices for drive-thru clinics.

- Print schedules and make sure parent information is in the EHR. Count how many doses are needed.
- Have parking spots reserved for people with a history of anaphylaxis to wait. Have an epi-pen close by and a cell phone to call 911 if needed.
- Walkie-talkies are a helpful tool for communicating between clinic staff.
- Use a large parking lot onsite or offsite. The more room, the better for smooth traffic flow.
- Use separate entrances and exits to prevent traffic issues and maintain a smooth transition between stations.
- Have good, clear signage, e.g., entrance only, exit only, and stop signs that are placed strategically.
- Traffic cones for clear traffic flow
- Music and balloons make it fun!
- Hold a post-clinic debrief with all staff involved. Talk about what worked well and what should be changed for the next clinic.



Welcome message for those participating in a scheduled drive-thru clinic

Handling patients

Scheduling strategies.

Our EHR can send a broadcast text with the link to the scheduling platform. We filtered the high-risk patients and their families first, then other patients broken up by age groups. A couple thousand texts went out each time. If you are only serving a small number, scheduling by phone may be adequate. There are many options.

Tips for Drive-thru Vaccination Clinics

Vaccination requests without an appointment.

Sometimes families don't realize they need an appointment to get the vaccine with their child. Be prepared with paper forms so you can quickly have a parent complete them and take a quick history. Develop a system to enter them into the EHR or Immunization Registry (IMR) later.

We do not currently offer walk-in vaccinations. There is a sign that asks patients to text or call the office upon arrival. If someone does call to ask if they can schedule a flu shot, they are instructed to schedule on-line.

Wait time strategies for clinics that include the COVID-19 vaccine.

We have had separate "park and poke" COVID-19 vaccine clinics. We reserved parking spots just outside one of our entrances near an exam room with a large window where we had the vaccine and everything else we needed. As cars pulled in, a nurse greeted them and did a pre-COVID vaccine questionnaire. She grabbed what she needed out of the exam room to give the vaccine, had them set a 15-minute timer on their phone, then sat in the exam room where she could see them through the window. Patients were instructed to honk if they needed her right away. The car left after 15 minutes. We are currently discussing workflow for larger COVID-19 vaccine clinics in the office.



Jill Kenneson and Jodie Kelley decorate the Essex Pediatrics walk-way in preparation for a drive-thru flu clinic

Vaccine storage, monitoring and maintaining temperature

Get stress-free storage.

We **highly** recommend one of the coolers you can borrow from the Vermont Health Department's Depot! The cooler maintained the temperature the entire clinic, and we kept an hourly paper temperature log. This made the storage stress-free. It was much easier to prepare. We did not need frozen water bottles or the required cardboard and bubble wrap layers.

Thank you, Essex Pediatrics!

We appreciate Essex Pediatrics sharing what they learned from operating drive-thru vaccine clinics. They are making themselves available to answer questions for other providers wishing to offer a vaccine clinic. You can reach them at jillk@ep.pcc.com or 802-879-6556.