

MDH wins national award for efforts to increase vaccinations among uninsured, underinsured adults in M

Written by Minnesota Department of Health
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The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) has won a national award for its efforts to increase immunization rates among uninsured and underinsured adults in Minnesota.

The National Influenza Vaccine Summit (NIVS) presented the award to representatives of MDH's immunization program at this week's 2013 National Adult and Influenza Immunization Summit in Atlanta. The award is one of five Immunization Excellence Awards that recognize individuals or organizations that have made extraordinary contributions towards improving adult and/or childhood influenza vaccination rates within their communities during the 2012-13 influenza season. MDH is the first to receive an award in the new category recognizing activities focused on the adult population beyond influenza: Overall Adult Immunization Activities - Beyond Flu.

In January 2011, the Uninsured and Underinsured Adult Vaccine (UUAV) Program began providing free vaccine for qualifying adults via public and private health clinics throughout the state. With no federal program devoted to vaccinating uninsured adults, the UUAV program helped fill a crucial gap for adults in Minnesota.

"I'm very proud of the work that staff has done on this project," said Minnesota Health Commissioner Dr. Edward Ehlinger. "The UUAV Program has established a consistent statewide supply of vaccine for adults who would otherwise face financial barriers to vaccination. It gives health care providers an alternative to charging patients unaffordable amounts for vaccination, and helps focus participating clinics' energies on increasing their adult vaccination rates."

Participating clinics can tailor the program to the needs of their patients by ordering the types and quantities of vaccine they are likely to use. Through an online clinic finder, patients can search for a participating clinic near them and health care providers can refer patients who may need these services.

In its first three years, the federally-funded program has provided more than 65,000 vaccinations at 156 sites across the state for adults who lack health insurance or who have insurance that does not cover immunizations. Additional funding is available to continue with another opportunity for public and private clinics to apply for UUAV eligibility.

"The program continues to grow and refine its approaches. It has already improved adults' access to vaccines and communicated to providers across Minnesota that adult vaccination is a priority that must not be deterred by financial considerations," said Commissioner Ehlinger.

Other awards being presented at the summit are:

- Overall Flu Season Activities
- Healthcare Personnel Campaign
- Immunization Coalitions/Public Health/Community Campaign
- Corporate Campaign

The National Influenza Vaccine Summit (NIVS) was founded by the American Medical

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Association (AMA) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Currently the NIVS is led by the Immunization Action Coalition (IAC), the CDC, and the National Vaccine Program Office (NVPO).