



Vermont EMS Vaccinator Program 2009 - 2010 Flu Season

November 2, 2009

Vermont is facing the most ambitious program ever undertaken by public health to vaccinate a significant portion of the state's population in a very short period of time. We are currently in the midst of a pandemic brought on by the novel H1N1 influenza virus and complicated by the expectation of seasonal flu occurring as part of the usual annual cycle.

One of the significant public health strategies is vaccination. Vaccines for both the H1N1 virus and seasonal flu have been produced and are being shipped for administration by public health agencies as well as private clinicians and others. EMS personnel and organizations in Vermont have expressed a willingness to help meet the challenge of delivering vaccinations through the coordinated efforts of public health and others in the health system. The participation of EMS personnel who are already qualified to perform intra-muscular injections may allow other qualified clinicians to focus on the screening of persons requesting vaccine or other clinical duties, and improve the output of clinics in performing vaccinations.

This document explains how EMS personnel can participate in vaccine administration under the Emergency Rule in effect until February 15, 2010. For additional information about becoming an EMS vaccinator, contact the Vermont Department of Health's EMS Office (VTEMS) at 800-244-0911.

What can EMS personnel do?

After the Commissioner of Health issues an Order authorizing EMT-Intermediate-03s and Paramedics to administer H1N1 and seasonal vaccine, under the recently promulgated emergency rule, interested qualified EMS personnel may file an application with VTEMS to administer IM injections of H1N1 and seasonal flu vaccine at a public or private vaccination clinic. The approval process for an interested EMT-Intermediate-03 or Paramedic will involve:

- An approximately one hour program of self-study on vaccine administration procedures
- Verification from the EMS person's head of service that the person is not needed for EMS duties while functioning as a vaccinator at the clinic
- Verification from the organizer of the clinic where the EMS person will be functioning that:
 - The person will be working under the medical orders of a clinician qualified to administer the vaccine
 - The person's clinical role will be limited to vaccine administration

- The clinic organizer acknowledges responsibility for providing the relevant legal protections for the EMT serving in the clinic

The above conditions will be documented on a form available from VTEMS and must be approved prior to functioning as an EMS vaccinator. All EMS personnel approved to provide vaccinations at specific clinics will be posted daily on the Vermont EMS website at www.vermontems.org. The website is also the place to download a copy of the self-study document for EMS vaccinators and other information.

Before an EMT-Intermediate-03 or Paramedic is approved to vaccinate, VTEMS will verify the person's VT EMS certification as current and having no conditions that would prohibit participation as an EMS vaccinator.

Consistent with their certification level and EMS agency responsibilities, EMS personnel at any level may assist in clinic administrative duties (clinic set up, check in, form distribution, filing, etc.) or provide emergency stand-by service with no special approval.

What roles do my squad and EMS district medical advisor play?

When an EMT-Intermediate-03 or Paramedic functions as an EMS vaccinator, they are doing so *outside* of their licensed EMS organization and usual medical direction oversight. This is an exception to the usual EMS chain of accountability where the certified EMS person works on behalf of a licensed EMS organization and under a system of EMS medical direction. This exception was established in the emergency rule, which requires the organizations operating the vaccine clinics to provide the medical direction and assume the responsibility for the operations of EMS personnel functioning as vaccinators at their clinics.

Why does my head of service need to sign this form if I am functioning outside of my usual squad role?

The Commissioner of Health does not want the delivery of EMS in Vermont to be diminished in any way because EMS personnel are providing vaccinations. When a person is functioning as a vaccinator, this is voluntary service and there must be assurance that their EMS agency is able to provide ongoing service to the community as the highest priority.

What training does the EMT-Intermediate-03 or Paramedic who wishes to function as an EMS vaccinator need to have?

EMT-Intermediate-03s and Paramedics certified in Vermont are already trained and qualified to administer intramuscular injections of medications approved for use in the usual course of emergency response. Nevertheless, EMT-I-03s and Paramedics will have different levels of experience administering IM injections. To assure all qualified personnel have a recent training experience and to give more detailed information about administration of vaccine in a clinic setting, a document describing the particular details of vaccine administration must be downloaded from the EMS website at www.vermontems.org and read prior to requesting approval from VT EMS to function as an EMS vaccinator.

What roles is an EMT-Intermediate-03 or Paramedic functioning as an EMS vaccinator prohibited from performing?

The EMT-Intermediate-03 or Paramedic **may not:**

- Participate in screening and approval of eligibility to receive vaccines
- Store, transport, transfer or otherwise receive, hold and distribute vaccine except for direct administration to persons already approved to receive it by an authorized physician

What are the steps in vaccinating a patient that an EMT-Intermediate-03 or Paramedic functioning as an EMS vaccinator will do at a clinic site?

The general duties are to:

- Greet the person arriving for the vaccination
- Verify their name
- Review their vaccination paperwork to assure no contraindications were noted and the paperwork has been signed by another clinician
- Draw the vaccine from a multi-dose vial
- Prepare the injection site
- Perform the injection, cover as needed afterwards
- Complete the documentation with your name, date, time and the required identification of the vaccine
- Send the person to a post vaccination waiting area

Further details of this procedure are described in the EMS vaccinator training manual.

Can the EMT-Intermediate-03 or Paramedic administer nasal vaccine?

No. The EMS vaccinator program is only authorized for seasonal flu and H1N1 injectible vaccines.

Can the EMT-Intermediate-03 or Paramedic administer H1N1 or seasonal flu vaccine to a child?

Yes.

If the EMT-Intermediate-03 or Paramedic is not working for their squad under EMS medical direction, who are they working for?

EMS personnel functioning as vaccinators are working on behalf of the clinic where they are working and under the medical orders of the clinician authorized to dispense the vaccine. In public clinics, medical orders and clinic operations supervision will originate from the Vermont Department of Health. In this setting, service is voluntary and there will be no monetary compensation by the State. For private clinics, a qualified physician must give the medical orders and the private agency is responsible for clinic operations

When can I start vaccinating?

You may start vaccinating after all of the following have been met:

- the Commissioner of Health has issued the order allowing EMT-I-03s and Paramedics to administer vaccinations
- you have completed the vaccinator training

- you have submitted to the VTEMS the vaccinator application, including the date(s) of clinics at which you want to help
- VTEMS has posted your name on its web site as being approved to administer vaccinations at the clinic(s) you have applied for.
- you and your clinic supervisor have verified that you are on the list as an approved vaccinator for the clinic where you will be working. The approved list will appear on the www.vermontems.org website or can be obtained by calling 800-244-0911 during regular business hours.

If my application as a vaccinator is denied, what recourse do I have?

You may request the Vermont Department of Health review your application, but the decision of the Department of Health is final and not subject to appeal.

Can my squad conduct a vaccination clinic for the community?

No. Your squad can **host** a clinic that is conducted by an agency authorized to administer vaccine, but the role of EMS vaccinators will be the same as those working at other clinics.

If someone claims to have suffered an illness or injury as a result of the vaccine, am I liable?

There is federal law that provides protection for persons involved with the administration of H1N1 vaccine. Note- the law **does not** provide protection for administration of seasonal flu vaccine. Qualified volunteers receive the same liability protections and workers' compensation coverage as State employees when they are serving at the request of and under the direction and control of a State agency such as the Vermont Department of Health. Volunteers in this arrangement may not receive hourly or salary compensation from a State agency and additional criteria may also apply. Further information is available at the VTEMS web site. An EMT-Intermediate-03 or Paramedic seeking approval to function in a clinic that **is not sponsored by the State of Vermont** (i.e. a hospital-based clinic, a physician's office, a pharmacy, etc.) should satisfy themselves that the operator of the clinic is providing the necessary legal protections for the vaccinator.

Can I fax the application to the VT EMS Office?

Yes. Send applications by fax to 802-863-7577. In every case, complete Section 1 and Section 2 of the form. If you are volunteering for service at public clinics (e.g. school clinics) overseen by the Vermont Department of Health, fill in as much of Section 3 as applies. We will have it signed and completed once a clinic official contacts us to request that you be approved for operations at a specific clinic site. If you will be vaccinating at a private clinic (e.g. hospital, pharmacy, physician's office), you will need to have the clinic operator fill out all portions of Sections 3 and 4.

Who can sign my application as the clinic organizer if I will be working in a State sponsored clinic?

A representative from the clinic planning team in the Vermont Department of Health will sign the applications for all State sponsored clinics. Fax the form to the VT EMS office

at 802-863-7577 and we will place your application in a reserve file until we hear from an authorized clinic organizer requesting approval for you to vaccinate.

Can I apply to vaccinate at clinics that might need my service, or do I have to name a specific clinic site and date?

If the head of your EMS agency agrees, you may apply for approval to vaccinate at public clinics at non-specific dates and locations through February 15, 2010. VT EMS will review your application to verify your certification status as an eligible vaccinator and place you on a reserve list that we will make available to persons organizing public or private clinics, as you have indicated on the application form. When VT EMS is contacted by a person authorized to operate a clinic with a request to approve you for a specific clinic, we will move your name to the approved list for clinic operations on the VT EMS website. www.vermontems.org

What happens if my EMS agency's needs for coverage change and I am needed for EMS duty on a date when I have been approved to vaccinate at a clinic?

VT EMS will remove your name from the approved list for a specific clinic if we are contacted and requested to do so by your squad's head of service. We will also make every effort to notify you and the clinic operator.

If I apply to vaccinate at a specific clinic on a specific date, do I have to submit a separate application if another clinic wants me to vaccinate for them?

Yes. If your original application identified only a specific clinic on a specific date, any additional clinics will require the submission of a new application.

What if I can't get the signature of my head of service because he or she is out of town?

If your chief's absence is expected to be brief, wait for the chief to return. If it will be prolonged, your squad's clerk or secretary should send a written notification to the VT EMS Office with the name of a person who has the authority to act on behalf on the organization.

What should I do if a clinic staffer says the clinic is overwhelmed, and they want me to screen patients for the vaccine?

Explain that you are not authorized to participate in the screening process as an EMS vaccinator.

Should I complete a patient care report for each clinic I do?

No. Unless there is a medical emergency, a clinic is not considered an EMS run and should not be documented as one. The clinic will have forms to document your activity.

When my service's license comes up for renewal, does a clinic count as an EMS run(s)?

No.

May I claim continuing education for learning about vaccine administration and participating in a clinic?

EMT-Intermediate-03s and Paramedics may claim one hour of continuing education for recertification. For EMT-Intermediate-03s this should be claimed in the category of Assessment and Management of Diabetic or Allergic emergencies and is awarded only for reviewing and updating IM injections procedures.

How do I let someone know that I am available and interested in serving as a vaccinator if needed?

You may contact your local Health Department District Office and let them know you are willing to function as an EMS vaccinator. They can tell you about dates and locations of public clinics in your area and whether there may be a need for your services. Once you fill out the EMS vaccinator application, your name will be placed on a reserve list of personnel available to serve. When a clinic organizer contacts VT EMS and indicates you are needed for a specific clinic, your name will be moved to the approved list for the specific clinic where you will be functioning. Please remember that you need a separate approval for each clinic where you will be providing vaccinations.

Will EMT-Intermediate-03s and Paramedics be able to provide vaccinations in the future?

Possibly. The rule authorizing EMS personnel to provide vaccinations for the current flu season will be in effect only until February 15, 2010. From now until January 15, 2010, VT EMS is accepting written comments on the emergency rule. If you have thoughts or comments on the current emergency rule and how it could be shaped for the future, please send them in writing to the VT EMS Office.