



Be Wise — ImmunizeSM

Physicians Caring for Texans

Be Wise — Immunize Quick Start Manual

A Step-by-Step Vaccination Outreach Guide



“Our Be Wise event was great, positive publicity for medicine.”

— Agnes Ward,
Smith CMS Alliance

Vaccinations are important, safe, and effective.

The Texas Medical Association’s Be Wise — ImmunizeSM program works with physicians, medical students, TMA Alliance members, and community coalitions to improve vaccination rates in Texas. Our goal is to make immunization outreach easy and rewarding for you.

Use this Be Wise — Immunize Quick Start Manual to plan your first or next vaccination event.

Here are ways you can make a difference:

Free or low-cost shot clinic. Plan, organize, and carry out a vaccination event in your community. TMA’s Be Wise program offers grant funding, event planning assistance, publicity and educational materials, free merchandise, and more.

Education event. Spread the message that vaccinations are important, safe, and effective by distributing vaccination literature or hosting an education event. Be Wise offers educational materials targeted to specific age groups and vaccine-preventable diseases. All materials are available in English and Spanish.

Immunization coalition. Start a community coalition or join an existing one. TMA offers grant funding to help kick-start or strengthen a coalition. You can use free Be Wise educational materials, publicity flyers, and more. TMA also can connect you with experts from our Be Wise — Immunize work group who have hands-on experience in implementing and sustaining successful coalitions.

Be Wise — Immunize: A Brief History

TMA launched Be Wise — Immunize in 2004 to reduce vaccine-preventable diseases in children and to promote the importance, safety, and effectiveness of vaccines. The program has since expanded to include adolescent and adult vaccinations.

Be Wise combines education for physicians and patients with hands-on vaccination clinics (sponsored by physicians, TMA Alliance members, and medical students) to increase statewide vaccination rates. Be Wise event sponsors have administered nearly 300,000 shots to Texas children, adolescents, and adults since the program began.

www.texmed.org/bewise/



Help Improve Vaccination Rates in Texas

Start today. Decide what type of vaccination project interests you: a free or low-cost shot clinic or an education event. Then follow the event-specific directions in this step-by-step guide.

Free or Low-Cost Shot Clinic Checklist

Each community is unique, so consider your local culture to decide what type of event is best. You may see a void and want to jump right in with a vaccination event, or you might decide to start by assisting organizations in your community that offer vaccinations, such as a community clinic, immunization coalition, or health department.

To host a shot clinic, you'll need two must-haves: vaccine and volunteers. Allow three to six months to plan your vaccination clinic.

Vaccine is often the biggest hurdle when planning a shot clinic. Texas Vaccines for Children (TVFC) physicians and providers, who receive vaccine at no cost for eligible children through 18 years of age, previously were a good source of vaccine for Be Wise events. In recent years, stricter federal inventory rules have created barriers for TVFC physicians and other providers who want to support community vaccination efforts. However, you can check with local TVFC participants who may be able to provide technical assistance or have other resources to share.

To find a local source for vaccine, contact your health department or health authority, county medical society, hospital, community clinic, medical school, and/or immunization coalition. Other potential sources for vaccine are mobile vaccination vans and medical supply providers, such as Henry Schein. Humanitarian aid organizations, such as Americares, also provide vaccine to nonprofit organizations.

Volunteers are necessary to read the immunization records, to give vaccines, and to handle logistics.

Follow these steps for a successful shot clinic:

- 1. Create an action plan:** Take time to complete a thorough action plan to help you organize the critical elements of your event, including:
 - **Audience.** Whom do you want to vaccinate — children, adolescents, and/or adults? What illness do you want to target — all childhood vaccine-preventable diseases, meningitis, or the flu? Focusing on one age group per event or on a particular preventable disease, such as the flu, is best. Or you might want to pick a ZIP code or school with an underimmunized population.
 - **Price.** Are you going to give shots at no cost or for a small fee? Even if you can secure vaccine at no cost, you will need to cover the vaccine administration fee, so you might want to host a low-

“The Immunization Collaboration of Tarrant County continues to partner with the TMA Foundation and Be Wise to strengthen successful vaccine events and grow the impact of community vaccine education.”

— Terri Andrews, Tarrant CMS Alliance and Immunization Collaboration of Tarrant County



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cost event where recipients help pay for the administration cost. If providing vaccinations at no cost, you may want to create a handout and/or have a poster that credits the donor.

- **Partners.** What organizations can you partner with to help cover the cost of and work at your event? Hosting a shot clinic can be a daunting task, made easier if you have others to help plan and execute logistics. Possible partners are civic groups, a medical school, your county medical society or alliance, faith-based organizations, nursing schools, and public health groups. They may be willing to volunteer time, supplies, or expertise, and help publicize your event. Or if one of these groups already sponsors a shot clinic in your community, you might want to offer your support rather than plan a new event.
- **Evaluation.** Determine how you will evaluate your success.

You can find a Shot Clinic Action Plan worksheet on the Be Wise website at www.texmed.org/bewise/.

2. Select a location: Possible locations could be a school, mall, community or senior center, mobile or free-standing medical clinic, church, or other easy-to-find place in your community. You may want to piggyback with another event, such as a back-to-school health fair. Be sure your location is easily accessible and offers free parking.

3. Order vaccine: Once you have secured a vaccine provider, decide how much vaccine you will need and when you'll need it. If you're working with a third-party supplier such as a physician, verify when he or she orders vaccine to make sure you receive it in time. Some vaccines, such as flu, need to be ordered months ahead, so be sure to start planning your event at least six months in advance. For example, Be Wise event sponsors typically order flu vaccine in the spring for events in the fall.

4. Arrange for vaccine storage: Proper storage and handling of vaccine is critical to its effectiveness and potency. Strict rules are in place for storing vaccine, particularly publicly funded vaccines such as those used for the TVFC program. If your event is at a location where vaccine is stored, staff should know best practices. For an event at an off-site location, be sure to work with an expert who can assist with vaccine transport. More information is available on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) websites.

5. Secure volunteers: A shot clinic requires three types of volunteers: immunization record readers, vaccinators, and miscellaneous volunteers:

- **Immunization record readers.** You'll need skilled readers to identify needed vaccinations, particularly for infants and children. Parents often bring their child's record and expect you to tell them which shots their child should get.

Shot Clinic Ideas

- Sponsor or assist with a back-to-school health fair to include vaccinations.
- Provide Tdap and flu vaccinations to workers at a local day-care center.
- Give pneumonia vaccinations at a local senior center.
- Add vaccinations to sports physical events for middle-schoolers.
- Work with a school nurse to offer required middle-school vaccinations at school.
- Tie a shot clinic to a high-school college night to ensure seniors are fully vaccinated.
- Give meningococcal vaccinations to incoming college freshmen.
- Offer vaccinations for the entire family at a fall flu shot clinic.

The Be Wise website contains a more extensive list of event ideas.





Vaccination Observances

You might want to use these recognized observances as a hook for your education or vaccination event:

- Cervical Health Awareness Month in January
- National Infant Immunization Week in April
- World Meningitis Day in April
- National Immunization Awareness Month in August
- Influenza Awareness Day on Oct. 1 in Texas
- National Influenza Vaccination Week in the fall/winter

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- **Physicians, nurses, or medical students to give the vaccinations.** Ask event partners (physicians, health department, clinic/hospital, immunization coalition, mobile van) if they have qualified personnel available. Be sure to check whether liability coverage is available through whichever group is providing the vaccinators. For example, unless nurses give vaccinations routinely, their license does not provide this protection.
- **Miscellaneous volunteers/logistics handlers.** Volunteers are needed for registration, traffic flow, entertaining children, and updating immunization records (see No. 6). Good volunteer sources are high-school or college students who need service hours. Other volunteers can come from all walks of life, such as a school's parent organization, senior citizen groups, and the Medical Reserve Corps.

Track volunteer hours throughout your planning, preparation, and event day to report to TMA. This donated time shows Be Wise funders contributions made by event sponsors. Do not include paid staff time.

Also, be sure to take care of your volunteers: Feed them and prepare them for your event (see No. 16). If yours is a large-scale event, you might even want to recognize/thank volunteers at a coffee break or luncheon after the event.

6. Decide how to record vaccinations: Determine whether you will record vaccinations in ImmTrac, in a local immunization registry, and/or on personal immunization records. ImmTrac is the state's secure and confidential vaccination registry. Recording vaccinations in ImmTrac is the best way to ensure someone is vaccinated properly, i.e., not under- or overvaccinated. ImmTrac also provides one location to keep up with vaccinations required for school and employment.

Texas law requires written consent to participate in ImmTrac and limits registry access to those individuals who are authorized to use it, such as TVFC providers. The ImmTrac page on the DSHS website has consent forms for participation and physician or provider sign-up.

7. Solicit donations (monetary and in-kind): Seek assistance for expenses from groups outside the medical community, who often provide funding for community projects: local businesses, banks, foundations, Rotary clubs, grocery stores, civic leaders, and event partners. In lieu of money, they might provide volunteers, copying, supplies, tables, snacks for attendees, meals for volunteers, advertising, help with media, and the like.

You can find sample letters to request donations on the Be Wise website. Be sure to recognize contributors on printed materials, signs, your website, and social media posts.

8. Reserve the Be Wise mascot: Children love mascots. Reserve Beatrice the Bee (the Be Wise bee costume) for your event. Be sure to reserve as soon as you know the date of your event, especially if your event is in August when Beatrice is in high demand.

- 9. Order Be Wise supplies:** At least one month before your event, order Be Wise supplies. TMA offers a variety of free promotional and educational materials. We also have t-shirts to identify volunteers, coloring/activity sheets for the children, giveaways such as stickers and crayons, adhesive bandages, and more. Some items have a small fee.
- 10. Promote your event:** TMA has flyers you can customize to promote your event. If you create your own promotional materials, be sure to let TMA review them to make sure TMA and Be Wise are credited properly. Ask local churches, schools, and public health departments to display event flyers. Use social media — Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube — to get the word out, too.
- 11. Alert the media:** Send a notice to your local media a few weeks before your event so they can include it on their community calendars. At least one to three days beforehand, send a media advisory (a brief, bulleted news release) to local media or call to invite them to your event. Be sure to have someone assigned to help the media and be your spokesperson, especially on the day of your event.

Sample news advisory templates are available on the Be Wise website. Plan for photo and video opportunities of your group giving out vaccinations. After your event, you might consider sending a photo and follow-up news release detailing your success. See TMA's "Get Media Exposure for Your Outreach Event" on the Be Wise website for more ideas.

- 12. Copy important forms:** You'll need parent vaccination consent forms and required vaccine information statements (VISs), as well as TMA's release to secure permission to take photos/videos. See the CDC website for VISs and sample consent forms.
- 13. Secure event supplies:** You may need tables for volunteers to sit at while they screen immunization records and give shots. Other things you may need are refrigerators or freezers to store vaccine, bandages and other medical supplies, nametags, pens and paper, water/juice and other treats to give children after they are vaccinated, refreshments for volunteers, Spanish translators, or other event-specific items.
- 14. Contact stakeholders:** Invite your state legislator and civic leaders to your event so they can see the Family of Medicine putting prevention into action. Your legislator and civic leaders even might roll up their sleeves and help you out.
- 15. Assign a photographer:** Have someone photograph your event. Be sure to get a signed TMA photo release from parents so TMA has permission to use the photos on our website, on social media, and in our publications. You also can post your photos on social media or send them to funders. For photos that reproduce well, set your camera on "high resolution." Photos of physicians in white coats or nurses giving shots, children with Beatrice the Bee, and other action shots are best. Find more event photography tips on the Be Wise website. After your event, send photo releases to TMA, along with your photos.

"I am always looking for ways to build bridges with the community. Our Be Wise — Immunize grant was the impetus to expand our vaccination event into a health fair."

— Lamia Kadir, MD, Austin



"We hand out the bee stress relievers to college kids getting the required meningococcal shot. They are a great replacement for a hand to hold (they were way too cool to be holding hands) and helped ease the anxiety of getting a shot. And then the students had a reminder to continue to be wise and immunize."

— Martha Vijjeswarapu,
Nueces CMS Alliance



16. Train volunteers: Schedule a training session at least one week prior to your event to make your event run more smoothly. You will want to go over logistics and volunteer duties. You might even provide a handout to explain volunteer roles at your vaccination event.

17. Evaluate: Be sure to record the number of attendees and vaccines given at your event to report to TMA, as well as volunteer hours spent on your event. Afterwards, complete an event survey provided by TMA. Also, forward newspaper articles and other media coverage so we can share these with Be Wise program funders.



Medical Student Event Tips

If hosting a shot clinic, contact administrative staff at your school to answer these questions:

- Does the school have a protocol for student-led vaccination events?
- Can medical students give the shots?
- Does the school's liability insurance cover this activity?
- Does the school or any of its entities, such as a health clinic, provide vaccinations? If so, can you obtain vaccine from there, or can they direct you to a source?

If you can't get vaccine through the school, contact local vaccination providers (even mobile vaccination providers) to see if you can purchase vaccine through them or partner with them on events. If you're part of a nonprofit organization, it may qualify to get vaccine through the suppliers mentioned earlier in the Vaccine section of the Free or Low-Cost Shot Clinic Checklist.

TMA has funding to help medical student groups with vaccination events. See the TMA Funding for Vaccinations section on the next page.

Be sure to alert your local county medical society to your event.

"Be Wise gave us an opportunity to serve our community and interact with patients in a way we do not often get to as medical students."

— Benjamin Karfunkle,
medical student,
The University of Texas Medical
School at Houston

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Education-Only Event Checklist

Because vaccination schedules are updated periodically and new vaccinations are added, you might want to organize an education-only event. Perhaps you can help counter vaccine hesitancy by sharing a message about the importance, safety, and effectiveness of vaccinations.

Follow these easy steps for a successful education event:

- 1. Choose your target audience:** Decide if you want to reach parents, adolescents/young adults, older adults, or a particular community or civic group. Also, determine if you'll sponsor an informational booth, distribute literature, or sponsor an educational presentation.
- 2. Decide on your message:** Determine which vaccine-preventable disease and vaccine you want to educate about. For example, you may want to educate parents, caregivers, and grandparents about how to protect a new baby from pertussis. In this case, you would focus on the Tdap vaccine. Or you may want to discuss the importance of flu, bacterial pneumonia, and shingles vaccinations at a senior center.
- 3. Select a location/venue:** Find a venue at an upcoming health fair, PTA or community meeting, senior citizen gathering, church function, or other event that fits your target audience and education goals. Think outside the box for ways to distribute Be Wise vaccination literature: welcome neighbor baskets; WIC (Women, Infants, and Children) and/or food bank packets; lunch-and-learn events; or new parent hospital take-home bags.
- 4. Secure volunteers:** Find volunteers to work at your booth or stuff information packets, or find a physician to give a talk about the importance of vaccinations.
- 5. Order Be Wise supplies:** At least a month before your event, order Be Wise materials. TMA offers free educational materials, posters, and giveaways such as stickers and crayons.
- 6. Evaluate:** Complete an event survey provided by TMA after your event to report your success. TMA shares this information with Be Wise program funders.

Whichever type of Be Wise event you choose, visit the TMA website at www.texmed.org/bewise/ to find resources mentioned in this publication, plus others. For more information, contact TMA's outreach coordinator, Tammy Wishard, at tammy.wishard@texmed.org or (512) 370-1470.



TMA Funding for Vaccinations

Be Wise — Immunize offers Local Impact Grants of up to \$2,500 to help fund a vaccination event. Local Impact Grants are available to:

- County medical societies (CMSs),
- TMA member-physician practices/clinics,
- TMA Alliance chapters, and
- Medical student chapters.

Grants can fund first-time or expanded shot clinics targeting underserved and uninsured children, adolescents, and/or adults. Find more information and a grant application on the Be Wise website.

The TMA Foundation offers Medical Community Grants and Medical Student Leadership Grants to CMSs, and to TMA Alliance and medical student chapters for projects that address TMA priorities, including vaccinations. CMSs and alliance chapters can receive up to \$7,500, and medical student chapters can receive up to \$3,000. Visit the TMA Foundation website at www.texmed.org/foundation/ to learn more.



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Be Wise — Immunize is a joint initiative led by TMA physicians and the TMA Alliance, and funded by the TMA Foundation.

Be Wise — Immunize is a service mark of the Texas Medical Association.