

Recognizing Pharmacists as Vaccines for Children Providers

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Richard H. Hughes, IV, Strategic Advisor with EBG Advisors and Member of the Firm at Epstein Becker Green, and **Spreha Choudhury**, Associate at Epstein Becker Green, co-authored an article in *Health Affairs*, titled “Recognizing Pharmacists as Vaccines for Children Providers.”

Following is an excerpt:

The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed numerous structural barriers and shortcomings in our nation’s vaccine programmatic infrastructure. As the pandemic’s public policy post-mortem continues, various reform proposals have and will continue to emerge. For example, the Biden administration has proposed the creation of an adult vaccine safety net or Vaccines for Adults (VFA) program, which we suggested could be logically built on the framework of the Vaccines for Children (VFC) program. Sara Rosenbaum and other authors have recently suggested that the VFC program should encompass novel non-vaccine products, such as monoclonal antibodies to prevent threats of respiratory illness. Acting on these suggestions would expand both eligibility and product coverage. Also, critical to building a robust vaccine infrastructure is the inclusion of additional settings for vaccine delivery—particularly pharmacies—in the VFC program and any future VFA.

VFC has been responsible for drastically improved immunization rates and reduction in health disparities that spurred the program’s enactment by Congress three decades ago. VFC created an immunization backbone in pediatric offices throughout the country by providing the means to vaccinate low-

People



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income patients, but the program has not reached all settings where children can be served. Pharmacists and pharmacies have played an increasingly important role in administering routine vaccines. Yet, despite being generally well-positioned, they remain underused in reaching children with much-needed vaccines. We describe the current legal and policy landscape that may be inhibiting pharmacist inclusion as VFC providers and discuss opportunities to remove these barriers.