



## 2021 Health Advisory #33

### New Program Offers Compensation for Proactive Vaccination Counseling

#### Commissioner's Advisory Directs Health Care Providers to Use Every Opportunity to Offer COVID-19 Vaccine Information

- The New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (NYC Health Department) announces a [new program to reimburse primary care providers](#) for reaching out to patients to encourage vaccination against COVID-19.
- A [Commissioner's Advisory](#), effective September 9, 2021, strongly urges health care providers (as defined below) serving patients in New York City to offer at every patient visit information on the efficacy, availability and administration of COVID-19 vaccination, consistent with the [Use Every Opportunity](#) campaign.

September 9, 2021

Dear Colleague,

The number one health threat facing our city is the COVID-19 pandemic. In order for all of us to care for our patients effectively and advance health equity, we must do everything in our power to protect our patients from COVID-19. The way forward is with vaccination. New York City data show that vaccination against COVID-19 is working. The rate of hospitalizations among unvaccinated New Yorkers is 10 times that of vaccinated New Yorkers. Across our city, 60% of all New Yorkers are fully vaccinated. However, in some neighborhoods, vaccination rates are much lower.

To improve vaccination rates of your patients across the city, the NYC Health Department is taking two important new steps:

- Launching a provider payment program to support proactive outreach for counseling about COVID-19 vaccination.
- Issuing a Commissioner's Advisory strongly urging providers to use every opportunity to counsel unvaccinated patients about COVID-19 vaccination at every visit and to offer vaccination or referral to a vaccination site.

Information on each program is provided below and will be available on our [Vaccine Information for Providers](#) webpage. A webinar for NYC health care providers is scheduled for Friday, September 17 at 1 p.m. -- registration is available [here](#).

If you have questions that are not addressed below, please contact the Provider Access Line at (866) 692-3641.

#### **COVID-19 Vaccine Outreach and Counseling Program**

This new program for primary care providers is intended to support proactive outreach to counsel patients who are not yet vaccinated against COVID-19.

Patients report that they want to hear from their providers about the benefits and safety of vaccination. To support these interactions, the NYC Health Department is partnering with some Medicaid and Medicare Advantage plans to compensate enrolled primary care providers to 1) initiate outreach to counsel eligible unvaccinated patients in their patient panel, 2) counsel them to obtain COVID-19 vaccination, and 3) arrange for vaccination either at the provider's facility or by assisting the patient in securing an appointment for vaccination.

Participating health plans will give providers the names of Medicaid and Medicare Advantage members eligible for this program. These lists will be specific to individual providers. Health plan notification and timing to providers may vary and primary care providers should wait for information from health plans over the month of September. A list of participating plans can be found in the [Vaccine Information for Providers](#) webpage.

Full details about what comprises a billable encounter, called a Complete Counseling Session, will be provided by each health plan and summarized in the COVID-19 Vaccine Outreach and Counseling Program Provider Toolkit. The toolkit includes answers to frequently asked questions. The toolkit is available in the [Vaccine Information for Providers webpage](#).

The Complete Counseling Session must be performed by a licensed health care provider (Clinical Outreach rate of \$50 per Complete Counseling Session) or by the health care provider's designee (Non-Clinical Outreach rate of \$25 per Complete Counseling Session). Requirements for the Complete Counseling Session are explained in the toolkit.

Prior to initiating a Complete Counseling Session, the provider must confirm eligibility of the patient for the Complete Counseling Session. For the encounter to be billable, all steps must be completed, and the encounter documented in the medical record. Each conversation must be at least three minutes long. If the patient has already received a dose of an FDA-authorized or approved COVID-19 vaccine, is fully vaccinated with a vaccine authorized for emergency use by the World Health Organization, or has a medical contraindication to all COVID-19 vaccines available in the U.S., please offer counseling as clinically appropriate (e.g., reminding a patient that a second dose is needed); however, the encounter will not be billable under this program.

The program will roll out during September 2021 and is intended to run through October 31, 2021. Plans will notify providers if the end date changes.

### **Advisory from the Commissioner of Health and Mental Hygiene of the City of New York**

On September 9, the Commissioner of Health issued an [Advisory](#) strongly urging health care providers to:

- Offer their unvaccinated patients information on the efficacy, availability and administration of COVID-19 vaccine at each patient visit until they are vaccinated.
- Offer to administer the vaccine or refer the patient to another health care provider who can administer the vaccine, if the patient (or, for those age 12 to 17, the patient's parent or legal guardian) agrees to COVID-19 vaccination.

- Document in the patient’s medical record that the provider or their designee has provided the above information and offered vaccination or referral if the patient agrees to be vaccinated.

Health care providers covered by this advisory include physicians, physician assistants, nurse practitioners and midwives serving patients ages 12 and older in inpatient hospitals, emergency departments, outpatient clinics and primary care offices in New York City. In an inpatient setting, if a patient has multiple treating providers, then the primary provider should provide the information and ensure documentation is completed.

The covered health care provider may offer the information personally or through a designee, such as another member of their health care team.

Consistent with the [Use Every Opportunity](#) campaign, this advisory encourages all health care facilities and practices to integrate COVID-19 vaccination into routine workflows. The advisory applies to patients ages 12 and older, with limited exceptions such as a patient who has a medical contraindication. When the patient is age 12 to 17, the vaccine information and offer to vaccinate the patient or refer for vaccination should be provided to the parent or guardian.

Additional Information:

- [Advisory from the Commissioner of Health](#)
- [FAQ on Commissioner’s Advisory](#)

Visit [NYC REACH](#) for tips on recording COVID-19 vaccine counseling and administration in your electronic health record system.

Thank you for all you are doing to help support the safety of your patients and our city.

Sincerely,



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Deputy Commissioner, Center for Health Equity and Community Wellness