Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)  
About Immunization Registries (Health Care Providers)

**What is an immunization registry?**

An immunization registry is a secure web-based database that can store your patients' immunization records. The registry helps medical practices keep their patients vaccinated on time, avoiding under- or over-immunization. All 50 states have immunization registries. California has **nine regional immunization registries** that cover the state. Registry users pay nothing for software, training and help desk support.

**Who can use the registry?**

An immunization registry can only be used by authorized medical office staff, hospitals, and public health departments for the purposes of evaluating shot records, sending reminders, billing, and protecting the public health. Programs such as WIC, childcare, schools, foster care may also be authorized to view shot histories for the children they serve.

**What can the registry do for my practice? Will it increase my staff’s busy workload?**

The registry reduces the staff time needed to:
- search for or replace patient immunization records
- provide records (“yellow cards” and “blue cards,”) for school, camp, or other activities
- calculate which vaccines are due
- give superfluous “just-in-case” immunizations when earlier shot records are missing
- request shot records from other providers
- prepare reminder notices, and
- track vaccine inventory.

Registry software is working quickly and efficiently in a variety of clinic settings. The software has a high satisfaction rate. Testimonials from medical office staff affirm these advantages. Your regional registry representative may be able to reduce the time needed to get your office using the registry and to maximize its benefits for your practice.

**Our immunization rates are high. Why should my practice join the registry?**

The immunization registry:
- saves staff time and helps your patients, as described above
- consolidates records when children have been immunized by different providers.
- keeps children up-to-date by making rapid, accurate assessments of the increasingly complex vaccine schedule.
- accurately tracks your practice’s coverage rates; informal estimates by providers of their practice’s rates may overestimate true coverage.
- improves immunization rates, whether high or low. Just one function of the registry, providing routine reminder notices to families, has been shown to raise rates by 17%.

**What computer equipment is needed?**

Most computers with Internet access are adequate for registry use. Registry representatives can evaluate your current system technology, identify any gaps, and direct you, as needed, to lower-cost options for equipment and Internet service.
**Who will train our staff to use the registry?**

Registry representatives can schedule free training for your staff at your convenience. Registry software is very user-friendly, requiring no prior computer skills. Free Help Desk services are available to answer questions as they arise.

**What if data entry errors occur after training? How do we ensure data accuracy?**

Registry software has built-in quality assurance features. Validation procedures identify inaccurate or missing data entered into the registry. Registry staff can help you correct data.

**How will the registry program integrate with our existing computer systems?**

The registry is currently being used successfully in practices both with and without electronic medical record and billing systems. There are several ways to transfer data between systems that will become increasingly available. Please contact your local registry representative about the feasibility of electronic data transfer.

**Are patients’ records in the registry kept secure?**

Registries comply with HIPAA and state law to protect patient privacy. Providers and registries must sign confidentiality agreements in order to share patient records. Each viewing of patient records is tracked to maintain an “audit trail.” Moreover, registry software has security features to protect confidential data from being seen by unauthorized sources.

**Some families might not like the idea of a registry. What are their options?**

Families at any time have the choice of whether their children are recorded in the immunization registry. All parents or guardians must be notified before their children’s records are entered in the registry. In practice few families have chosen to not participate after this notification. Participating families also have the choice whether to receive reminders. They may also inspect their children’s registry records for accuracy.

**Can I access patient records from another part of California?**

Check with your regional registry representative. Data are currently shared within each of California’s nine regional registries. Over the next years the regions will be electronically linked. This will enable a participating provider anywhere in California to receive patient immunization data from any of the state’s regions.

**How do we maintain control of our patients’ records? Will other practices be able lure away our patients?**

Your patients’ immunization records are protected by security measures as well as by agreements signed by all providers participating in the registry. Providers must use specific identifying information to search for children in the registry and cannot browse through all records.

Additional information about California immunization registries can be found at [www.ca-siis.org](http://www.ca-siis.org).