

Vote & Vax Setting Up a Successful Clinic in Your Community

Fall 2016



VOTE & VAX

Setting Up a Successful Clinic in Your Community

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Dear Colleagues,

Thank you for your interest in the 2016 *Vote & Vax* program. Holding a *Vote & Vax* clinic can be a great benefit for your community, but also an important responsibility for your organization. To help your clinic run smoothly, we offer you this 2016 *Vote & Vax* Resource Guide. We have written this guide for mass immunizers (e.g., pharmacists, public health departments, visiting nurses associations, immunization coalitions, and others), focusing on the distinctive opportunities and challenges that are part of developing and operating a flu shot clinic at or near a polling place. We have also incorporated lessons learned from previous *Vote & Vax* clinics. The Resource Guide is designed as an easy step-by-step guide to launching a successful *Vote & Vax* initiative in your community.

As public health professionals or pharmacy, we know that not everyone who can benefit from a flu shot will visit a doctor's office during the flu season. It was with this reality in mind that SPARC (Sickness Prevention Achieved through Regional Collaboration) began its *Vote & Vax* work in 1995. SPARC's former Executive Director Donna DiMartino, a public health nurse with a sharp eye towards innovation, recognized the value of providing at-risk populations with flu shots on Election Day. The idea flourished, and since its inception SPARC has helped develop a growing number of *Vote & Vax* clinics that have immunized thousands of older Americans and members of vulnerable populations.

There are many important reasons to launch a *Vote & Vax* program. Most importantly, *Vote & Vax* clinics make sense because they are an efficient and cost-effective means to better protect the health of the communities you serve. But what you might not know is that there are various other benefits that providers enjoy from launching *Vote & Vax* initiatives. First, it's a great opportunity to increase your community's awareness of the importance and role of its local public health service providers. *Vote & Vax* is a way to let your community know that its local provider is a friendly, responsive and effective organization. Secondly, *Vote & Vax* can provide an important boost to your organization's bottom line. The clinics attract large numbers of persons with whom providers do not otherwise have contact and therefore may increase provider revenues. *Vote & Vax* is an innovation that addresses a community problem with a community solution. With previous support of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, AARP, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), in 2016 we are able to provide—in addition to this guide—technical assistance and outreach tools to assist in setting up local *Vote & Vax* clinics. More information about these valuable services is available at www.voteandvax.org. I hope you will take advantage of this opportunity and join us in expanding access to an important and promising new public health practice.

Sincerely,

Douglas Shenson, M.D., M.P.H.

President, SPARC (Sickness Prevention Achieved through Regional Collaboration)
and Program Director, *Vote & Vax*

Checklist

The following is a helpful step-by-step checklist for how to organize a *Vote & Vax* clinic:

“The *Vote & Vax* clinics we held at every polling place in Saline County on Election Day 2006 did require some extra work but were easy to organize. *Vote & Vax* provided the step-by-step information we needed.

Gayle Thomas,
Administrator, Saline County Health
Department, Missouri



- Read the 2016 *Vote & Vax* resource guide, *Setting Up a Successful Clinic in Your Community*, for how-to instructions on organizing flu vaccination clinics at polling places.
- Identify and contact your local election authority.
- Select the polling place(s) where you would like to hold your flu clinic.
- Obtain signed approval from your local election authority to hold a flu clinic at local polling place. You must obtain signed approval for each polling site you select. Additional polling places can be added as planning and time permits; however, you must obtain and submit approval for each site.
- Fax the approval form from your local election authority to the *Vote & Vax* program office at (617) 796-7964, and register to become an official local partner. As a registered *Vote & Vax* partner, you'll have opportunity to be in contact with a *Vote & Vax* technical assistance specialist.
- In addition to the *Vote & Vax* Resource Guide, download a copy of the 2016 *Promoting your Vote & Vax Clinic Guidebook*, including templates for press releases and other customizable materials.
- Register your local polling place flu clinic information for posting on the *Vote & Vax* Web site at www.voteandvax.org. Community residents will be able to locate it from the Web site.
- Conduct advance promotion of your *Vote & Vax* clinics.
- Hold your *Vote & Vax* clinics.
- Submit post-participation reports and evaluations.

Background

Vote & Vax: A Public Health Strategy

In the fall of 2016, millions of Americans will vote at local polling places, and the majority will be age 50 or older, a key population for whom a flu shot is recommended. Many will also have medical conditions that put them at increased risk of contracting influenza. For these voters and others who come to the polling place, influenza is a real threat. Influenza epidemics are responsible for thousands of deaths annually. Together with pneumonia, influenza represents the fifth leading cause of death for older adults.

Election Day represents a particularly good opportunity to make contact with those who have not been reached by earlier efforts. Since polling places must meet strict accessibility requirements, they are places that are welcoming to vulnerable populations.

In 2008, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation funded the first nationwide *Vote & Vax* effort to deliver flu shots at polling places. SPARC provided support to public health agencies across the country, helping them put into operation *Vote & Vax* clinics in their communities. On Election Day, the initiative delivered 21,434 influenza vaccinations at 331 polling places in 42 states and the District of Columbia. Almost 70 percent of vaccine recipients were in priority groups, as defined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and almost half were “new” flu shot recipients.

Based on this overwhelming success, SPARC will launch a tailored national program in 2016, offering guidance, outreach strategies, materials and technical assistance to providers interested in deploying *Vote & Vax* in their communities.

¹ Additional information about the pilot project is available at www.voteandvax.org and in the *Journal of Public Health Management and Practice* (2008 May/June).

Some background information about local elections.

General elections are held in even-numbered years on the Tuesday between November 2 and November 8—that is, on Tuesday after the first Monday in November. Most states have local elections every year. Elections are usually run by counties, cities or townships. In 2002, Congress passed the Help America Vote Act to assure improved accessibility for voters to make sure that every eligible voter actually gets to vote.

Setting Up Your Clinic

Identify your local election authority and determine when it will be holding an election this year.

Your first and most important step in getting a *Vote & Vax* clinic off the ground is to establish a partnership with the local election authority. Your election authority may regulate elections at the state, county or municipal level and is an important ally in the selection of your clinic sites, helping you pinpoint where your local polling places will be located and which ones might suit best for your flu clinic. The election authority is likely listed in the phone book in the section on local government under elections, board of elections, supervisor of elections, clerk, registrar or auditor. You can also consult the state roster at the Web site of the National Association of State Election Directors at www.nased.org/ and search the Election Officials Directory for your election authority: www.usvotefoundation.org.

Learn about your local regulations.

You will want to learn about local regulations governing activities near polling places and introduce yourself to local election officials. It is essential that *Vote & Vax* clinics conform to election laws. The election authorities will be especially concerned about any potential impediments to the flow of voters, any nearby partisan political activity and the presence of unnecessary distractions to voters.

A cautionary note.

Vote & Vax campaigns are not exercises in political partisanship. Public health campaigns work because they promote good health in the community without regard to political affiliation. Immunizers should provide vaccinations to all appropriate recipients who attend the *Vote & Vax* clinics regardless of whether or not they vote. *Vote & Vax* clinics are not designed for the exclusive benefit of voters, nor can they be used as

“The use of polling places works beautifully. We consider our participation in *Vote & Vax* to be very valuable.”

Tina T. Del Piero, C.F.R.E.,
Development Manager,
Central Coast Visiting Nurse
Association, California



a “get out the vote” tactic. For example, providers should not offer any special enticements. That is, *Vote & Vax* clinics must offer flu shots at polling places under the same terms as offered in other flu clinics in the area. *Vote & Vax* clinics should adhere to the policies that apply to your agency’s other community-based clinics. The integrity of the *Vote & Vax* project depends on assuring politically equitable access to immunization services.

Consider your target populations.

The next step in setting up a *Vote & Vax* clinic is to research polling locations. When beginning this research, it is important to think about your target populations. Where will you make the greatest impact on health? In the last 20 years, the level of influenza vaccination delivery has increased dramatically. However, vaccination levels among minority populations lag behind those of others. For example, while 1999 vaccination levels were 69.0 percent among non-Hispanic whites age 65 and older, they were only 50.6 percent among non-Hispanic blacks and 54.8 percent among Hispanics in the same age range.² Influenza vaccination delivery is also low among persons age 50 to 64, for whom the flu shot was newly recommended in 2000. It is sometimes helpful to use demographic information gathered by the census to help prioritize locations for flu shot clinics. Demographic information for your community is available on the U.S. Census Bureau Web site at www.census.gov. The information is organized by county, city and congressional district.

Choose the right polling place.

Voting usually takes place in a public building, such as a school, city hall or a community center. Although you may be attracted to a location because of a local community’s needs, consider operational factors as well. Is there parking available nearby? Is there space to accommodate a clinic without interfering with voting activities? If not, is there an appropriate facility in the immediate vicinity? Is there a place in the designated space to register for a flu shot and sufficient area for people to line up for vaccinations? Further, consider whether disabled or infirm individuals can easily move between the polling area and the clinic. As with all flu shot clinics, you should contact the custodial staff to review your plans and your set-up. The final selection of the clinic location(s) must be done in coordination with your local election authority.

² Centers for Disease Control. Public Health and Aging: Influenza vaccination coverage among adults aged >50 years and pneumococcal vaccination coverage among adults aged >65 years—United States, 2002. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, 2003;52(41):987-992.

Make it official.

It is important to have a signed Letter of Agreement so that election officials understand that you recognize the strict guidelines associated with polling places. You must have selected at least one polling place before asking the local election authority to sign your Letter of Agreement. Once you have received official permission for one polling place, you may add additional locations—just make sure to get an election authority Letter of Agreement signed for each additional polling place.

If your *Vote & Vax* clinic is easily accessible from, but not directly inside, the polling place(s), you are also welcome to join this initiative. In that case, please provide us with a letter from your agency or organization stating that all *Vote & Vax* activities are taking place at locations that are not covered by election authority regulations.

A sample election authority Letter of Agreement is located at the end of this guide. As you build your case for launching a *Vote & Vax* clinic, you may want to show election officials examples of successful *Vote & Vax* clinics that have been held at polling places in previous elections. You can also direct election officials to the *Vote & Vax* Web site at www.voteandvax.org for additional information.

Train your staff.

If you use volunteers to help staff your adult immunization clinics you will need to offer them in-service training before flu shot season begins. It is important that the volunteers and professional health care workers participating in your *Vote & Vax* clinics understand the ground rules for operating clinics at polling places. Some of these rules are noted below and more detailed information can be obtained from your local election regulators. Some immunizers have found it helpful to invite an election official to speak directly to their staff.

Set your schedule.

Polling hours vary from community to community, but polling places usually open between 6 and 8 a.m. and close between 6 and 9 p.m. The middle of the day—between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m.—is often the slowest time at a polling place, but can be a time when large numbers of voters over the age of 50 come to the polling place. The hours at which your clinic remains open should coincide with the voting times of your target population. An experienced local election official can be a great source of advice when setting the hours for your *Vote & Vax* clinic.

Know the players.

A variety of people work at polling places, and it is helpful to understand their roles and responsibilities. Election judges are in charge of polling places—some states have multiple election judges at polling sites. Poll workers, who are usually volunteers, check in voters and explain to them where and how to vote. Often, observers from political parties attend to make sure that their party is being treated fairly.

Prepare your site.

Polling places must be accessible to everyone regardless of physical ability or preferred language. Every polling place in the United States is required to accommodate people with disabilities by ensuring they can vote privately and independently. In communities with large numbers of non-English speakers, federal law requires bilingual or multilingual voting materials. Materials may be available in Spanish, Asian languages, and American Indian and Alaskan native languages. If your clinic is active in such a community, you should have information about adult immunizations in all languages that are commonly used.

Plan your approach.

Vote & Vax clinics should always offer immunizations to voters after they have voted. Those who are not voting can go directly to the clinic. Please coordinate your activities with polling place personnel responsible for directing the flow of voters, and be mindful of the signage, traffic cones and handicap ramps. As noted earlier, charges for vaccinations should apply as they do at your other community clinics. It is helpful to be very clear about how your agency handles billing and insurance coverage issues—and well-displayed signs at the clinic can be useful. Crowds will develop at peak voting times. Wherever there are large crowds, local law enforcement will ensure there is adequate security.

Publicize your event.

Let people know in advance that they can find you at the polls. *Vote & Vax* clinics should make getting a flu shot as convenient as possible. Many adults will be grateful that they can fulfill their civic responsibilities and protect themselves from influenza in the same trip.

Outreach methods might include printing flyers and posters or developing public service announcements for radio and local cable TV. Where funding is available, advertisements placed in local papers will also help spread the word. A local phone number, e-mail address or Web site should serve as a contact point for people with questions.



“Our *Vote & Vax* program provided very good public relations for the health department. We reached individuals we would not have reached using traditional methods. We were also able to use the clinics as practice mass clinics for bioterrorism preparedness. The staff really enjoyed doing them.

Sherrie Ahlstrom,
Community Health Supervisor,
Tooele County Health Department,
Utah

You might want to offer a representative from your agency or department and a local election official as a guest to your local TV and radio stations. You should also mail press kits detailing the campaign to health editors of local papers. Remember, newspapers and TV stations may want to send a reporter to a polling place to see the clinic in action. A free, comprehensive communications toolkit is available to all *Vote & Vax* participating provider organizations and includes many resources to help inform the community of your clinic.

Promote your organization.

Vote & Vax clinics are still a novelty. Launching these clinics provides an opportunity for your community to learn about the services that your agency offers. Letting others know that you have organized a *Vote & Vax* clinic also demonstrates that you are an innovative and committed health care provider.

Plan ahead for supply problems.

In recent years, the flu shot supply has been unpredictable—particularly in early November. Nonetheless, *Vote & Vax* clinics have continued their work, and have successfully offered a variety of disease prevention and health promotion services. These services have included:

- general information about adult immunizations and flu prevention tips;
- information about which groups have been prioritized to receive flu shots and about how to obtain a flu shot if a person is in a priority group;
- other preventive measures such as pneumococcal vaccinations, tetanus shots, hepatitis shots and screening services for cardiovascular disease; and
- referral information and/or appointments for mammogram exams.

The idea is to take advantage of an annual opportunity to reach and protect large numbers of older adults from preventable illness. *Vote & Vax* providers should therefore plan for the contingency that flu shot supplies may be low, and should obtain adequate stocks of other vaccines or of health promotion materials they believe will benefit their community.

Measure your effectiveness.

It is always a good idea to measure whether or not you are having an impact. One outcome that is easy to determine is the number of flu shots that you delivered at the *Vote & Vax* clinic. How does this number compare with your other flu shot clinics, or if applicable, to last year's *Vote & Vax* clinic? You may also want to assess whether the clinic at the polling place is immunizing clients who would normally get their shot

elsewhere—or whether you are reaching individuals who are not in the habit of receiving vaccines. To begin to answer this question, you can ask clients, perhaps when they register, whether they had a flu shot last year. You can further refine your assessment by noting the gender and age of persons who are immunized. This will help you identify and reach out to those groups who are not coming to the clinic. Registered *Vote & Vax* 2016 participants will receive a sample questionnaire to use at the flu clinics.

Document your experience.

The following set of measures will help you improve the operation of your *Vote & Vax* clinic. Here are some questions to ask yourself, your colleagues, and where possible, your clients:

1. How convenient was client flow?
2. Were flu shot recipients satisfied with your *Vote & Vax* clinic(s)?
3. Were election authorities satisfied with the clinic(s)?
4. Were there any particular difficulties?
5. Would you repeat the clinic next year?
6. Would you recommend that other immunizers develop *Vote & Vax* clinics?

Share your results.

It's always helpful to know if *Vote & Vax* clinics are adding to the total number of flu shots delivered to members of your community. Unfortunately, it is difficult to obtain the information necessary to evaluate this question. Nonetheless, our collective data from this project can help communities make informed decisions about whether *Vote & Vax* clinics can effectively help them reach their target populations. We ask that, at minimum, participating organizations provide the number of flu shots administered and the number of participating polling places following Election Day 2016.

In Closing

This project lays the groundwork for a much larger effort, one aimed at making a range of preventive services, including immunizations, increasingly accessible to communities across the country. The establishment of regular *Vote & Vax* clinics represents an important milestone along that road. It is our hope that community-based providers of flu shots across the country will continue to build on yours and our shared experience, and incorporate this fresh strategy in their effort to protect the health of our communities.

Helpful References

The following Web sites offer information about adult immunizations, voting and elections and your community.

Adult Immunizations

National Immunization Program

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

www.cdc.gov/vaccines

The National Immunization Program of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) provides leadership for the planning, coordination and conduct of immunization activities nationwide. Their Web site provides extensive information on immunization guidelines, immunization data and statistics, and a variety of resources for practitioners and health departments.

Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

www.cdc.gov/MMWR

The Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR) is a CDC publication that gives an account of specific infectious diseases, including influenza and pneumococcal disease. MMWR also issues reports from the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System. This data system tracks the utilization of adult immunizations nationally and by state.

Medicare

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

www.medicare.gov

The official U.S. Government site for people with Medicare provides a good deal of beneficiary-oriented material on the importance of getting a flu shot. A search for “flu shot” at the site will connect you with a list of relevant downloadable documents and answers to frequently asked questions.

Elections

National Association of State Election Directors

www.nased.org

The Web site of the National Association of State Election Directors provides links to a variety of nonpartisan Web sites concerned with voting. The society also presents useful information about the proper administration of elections.

US Vote Foundation

www.usvotefoundation.org

The US Vote Foundation serves U.S. citizens with services and election data. The foundation is a private, non-partisan, public charity founded in 2005. The Foundation has no official connection with any government entity. The Foundation hosts a “Find your Local Election Official Directory”, which provides local address and contact information.

Your Community

U. S. Census Bureau

www.census.gov

In addition to any locally-based Web sites—such as those of your town, city or county—the Bureau of the Census has established a Web site from which you can obtain detailed demographic information about your community. As described above, this information is useful in targeting your efforts for particular populations and for prioritizing the selection of local polling places at which to situate immunization clinics.

Letter of Agreement

All providers must submit a signed copy of form A, B, or C in order to participate in Vote & Vax 2016

The following forms constitute the Letter of Agreement to be filled out by you and then signed by your local election authority and/or an official representative of the provider agency. Form A, B, or C must be returned in order to participate in and receive technical assistance for *Vote & Vax* 2016.

Which form do I use?

- **Use Form A** if your *Vote & Vax* clinic is located WITHIN the polling place.
- **Use Form B** if your *Vote & Vax* clinic is NOT located within the polling place, but is located in close proximity to the polling place.
- **Use Form C** if your *Vote & Vax* clinic is NOT located within the polling place, but you intend to promote your clinic WITHIN the polling place.

To complete the Letter of Agreement:

1. Choose Form A, B, or C, depending on where your flu vaccine clinic will be located.
2. Insert your organization name and the location(s) of your clinic(s) into the spaces provided.
3. Secure the appropriate signature(s) of approval, depending on the option you choose.

When completed and signed, this form should be faxed to (617) 796-7964. Once the required information is submitted, providers will receive confirmation and information on how to obtain additional materials and technical assistance on the *Vote & Vax* Web site: www.voteandvax.org.

Form A

Use this form if your **Vote & Vax** clinic is located **WITHIN** the polling place. This form must be signed by an election authority and an official representative from the provider organization.

Organization: _____

has requested to operate one or more immunization clinics on Election Day 2016 on the premises of the following polling place(s):

Address(es): _____

Permission has been given by the **local election authority** and the **provider organization**.

The **Election Official:** _____ understands that **Organization:** _____ has agreed to act in compliance with state and local laws and regulations, including the following:

- **Organization:** _____ will abide by all local regulations regarding the placement of activities in proximity to polling places;
- **Organization:** _____ will in no way impede the free flow of persons to or from the polling place;
- **Organization:** _____ will not engage in any partisan political activity in connection with operating the immunization clinic; and
- **Organization:** _____ will locate the clinic at a mutually agreed upon location a reasonable distance from the voting activity.

Election Official

Provider Organization

Signature

Signature

Name

Name

Position

Position

Date

Date

Form B

Use this form if your *Vote & Vax* clinic is NOT located within the polling place, but is located in close proximity to the polling place. This form must be signed by an official representative from the provider organization.

Organization: _____

is planning to hold immunization clinics on Election Day 2016 within easy reach of the following polling place(s).

Address(es): _____

The locations of these clinics are not within the jurisdiction of the polling authority.

Permission has been given by the **provider organization**.

Provider Organization

Signature

Name

Position

Date

Form C

Use this form if your *Vote & Vax* clinic is NOT located within the polling place, but you intend to promote your clinic WITHIN the polling place. This form must be signed by an election authority and an official representative from the provider organization.

Organization: _____

has requested to place immunization clinic promotional posters, signage, or flyers on the premises of the following polling place(s) on Election Day 2016.

Address(es): _____

Permission has been given by the **local election authority** and the **provider organization**.

The **Election Official:** _____ understands that **Organization:** _____ has agreed to act in compliance with state and local laws and regulations, including the following:

- **Organization:** _____ will abide by all local regulations regarding the placement of activities in proximity to polling places;
- **Organization:** _____ will in no way impede the free flow of persons to or from the polling place;
- **Organization:** _____ will not engage in any partisan political activity in connection with operating the immunization clinic; and
- **Organization:** _____ will locate the clinic at a mutually agreed upon location a reasonable distance from the voting activity.

Election Official

Provider Organization

Signature

Signature

Name

Name

Position

Position

Date

Date

Vote & Vax 2016 Fax Cover Sheet for Letter of Agreement

To: Douglas Shenson, M.D., M.P.H.—*Vote & Vax* 2016

Fax: (617) 796-7964

From: _____

Re: *Vote & Vax* 2016 Letter of Agreement

Pages: _____

Date: _____

Please find attached my letter of agreement, filled out and signed by my agency
and/or my local election authority.

Name: _____

Agency: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

TO RETURN THIS FORM BY MAIL, SEND TO:

Douglas Shenson, M.D., M.P.H.

Attention: *Vote & Vax*

76 Prince Street

Newton, MA 02465

If you have any questions, please call (617) 796-7966.

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VOTE & VAX

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