

# How to operate a community-based shot clinic

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# St. Paul's Immunization Clinics at WIC How They Started and Why They Work

by Deborah L. Wexler, MD  
Executive Director, Immunization Action Coalition  
December 1995

## Why Immunize at WIC?

Three children died of measles in St. Paul, Minnesota, during the measles epidemic of 1989-1990. Knowing that these deaths could have been prevented, St. Paul Public Health began an immediate investigation into immunization rates of children who were enrolled in the WIC program. WIC distributes food and nutrition services to well over half of the children in St. Paul who are under the age of five. The results of the investigation were alarming: 54% of age-eligible children had not received their MMR, and many were also behind on other vaccinations. It was clear that something had to be done and that WIC was the best place to begin.

## How the Immunization Clinics Project Began

In October of 1990, after the release of this discovery, St. Paul Public Health appointed a public health nurse and a Hmong bilingual nursing assistant to set up immunization services in the WIC clinic where children had the lowest immunization rates. Shortly after this first WIC immunization clinic was opened, West Side Community Health Center (which is a federally funded community health center) approached St. Paul Public Health and offered to bring its own staff into three other neighborhood WIC sites to provide on-site immunization services. Through this bigger and stronger alliance, St. Paul Public Health, the West Side Clinic, and the St. Paul/Ramsey County WIC program committed themselves to finding undervaccinated children and bringing immunization services to neighborhoods.

## How the Immunization Clinics Work

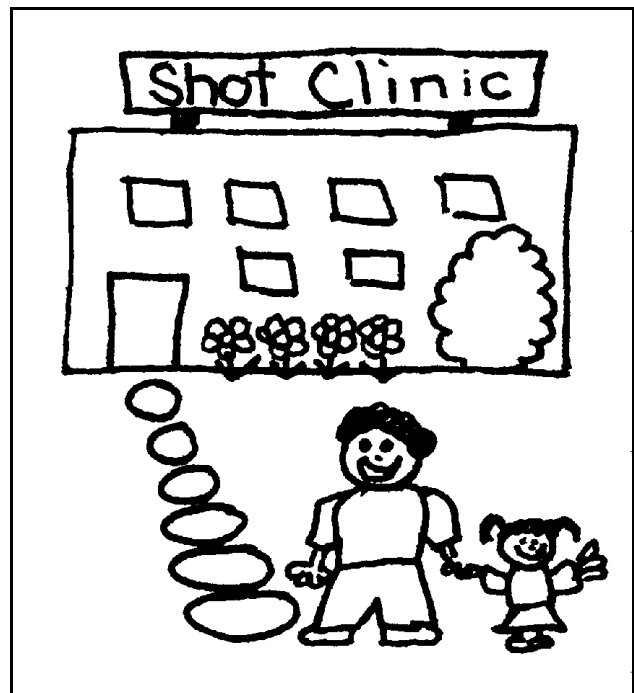
Vaccination services occur on all WIC coupon "pick-up" days because of the large number of people who come into WIC on that day.

West Side Clinic shares the space occupied by the WIC clinic, whether it is in a community center, a church, or another clinic site, but the immunization services are independent of WIC.

No appointments are made; it is simply a walk-in immunization clinic.

## Who Staffs the Immunization Clinics

Initially, the clinics were staffed by a doctor who spoke English and Spanish; a clerk, an LPN and/or an MA who all spoke Hmong and English; and an RN who spoke English. The RN was the sole shot giver, and everyone on the staff (including the doctor) had multiple roles and served when needed as interpreters, health educators, speech givers, and immunization assessors. Currently, these neighborhood-based immunization clinics are staffed by a clerk, an LPN, and an RN.



West Side Clinic does not ask that WIC staff members provide assistance to the immunization team, other than to give West Side Clinic access to WIC clients. An RN provides immunizations from standing orders. (An RN must be on site in case any adverse reactions occur.)

#### The Clients: Who They Are and What Vaccines They Receive

West Side Clinic will vaccinate anyone who walks into the WIC clinic, i.e., infants, children and adults, whether they are enrolled in WIC or not. The staff, however, encourages people to use their own primary health care clinic for well-child checks but finds that many people don't have a primary clinic. If people do have their own clinic, there are often multiple barriers to obtaining health care in their clinic. The immunization clinics, therefore, fill a gap for many who would otherwise be behind on, or not receiving, immunizations at all. The clinic staff also discusses services offered at West Side Clinic.

With almost no publicity, these immunization clinics are busy. Initially the clinic staff saw an average of 20-25 people each morning. Now approximately 10-20 people are seen in a three-hour clinic.

The clinics provide DTP, DTaP, DT, Td, MMR, Hib, DTP-Hib, OPV, hepatitis B, pneumonia, and influenza (in season) vaccines. Vaccine is made available through Vaccines for Children (VFC), the state health department, and from West Side Clinic's own vaccine supplies. Before VFC, free vaccine was available to West Side Clinic from St. Paul Public Health.

After every vaccination, an inexpensive toy (e.g., coloring book and crayons, rattle, small book) is given to the child. Toys are donated by various individuals and businesses.

In the past, the clinic also offered blood testing for hepatitis B due to the large numbers of Southeast Asians who utilize these clinics. A panel of three tests was done: HBsAg, antiHBc, and antiHBs. This service is no longer available due to a shortage of staff.

Since the earliest years of operation, the immunization clinics that serve refugees have strongly encouraged hepatitis B vaccination for all refugee children including teenagers.

#### Immunization Talks Given at the WIC Clinic

At the start of the clinic hours, the doctor, nurse, and/or health educator (interpreter) usually give a presentation about immunizations to the people who are waiting to pick up their WIC coupons. There are usually up to 20 people waiting for WIC, which gives the shot clinic staff a great "captive" audience. Depending on how busy the immunization clinic is, the talks last anywhere from 3 to 30 minutes.

The topics include how the vaccination clinic works, why vaccinations are important, what are the different vaccines, what kinds of side effects may be experienced with the different vaccines, who needs shots, what is hepatitis B, the importance of knowing one's hepatitis B status (for refugees), what is diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus, polio, and *Haemophilus influenzae* type b.

#### Reimbursement for the Immunization Clinics

Every week the immunization clinics see children and adults who have no insurance and cannot afford to pay. The immunization clinics ask for a donation from those without insurance, but many

uninsured people pay nothing and no bills are sent to individuals who can't afford shots.

The West Side Clinic bills for immunization services for individuals who have insurance and is reimbursed for most insurance claims they submit. There are two or three HMOs, however, that will not pay for immunization services delivered to their underimmunized patients at these clinics. Regardless of whether the services can be billed, the immunization clinics will vaccinate ALL children if they are behind on their shots.

#### Paperwork and Shot Cards

The immunization clinics use the Minnesota immunization record card and always give the patient a record of any shot received at the clinic. The clinic staff writes the date the next shot is due and which shot it will be on a "post-it" note and attaches it to the child's shot record. This reminder works well for helping parents remember when to return.

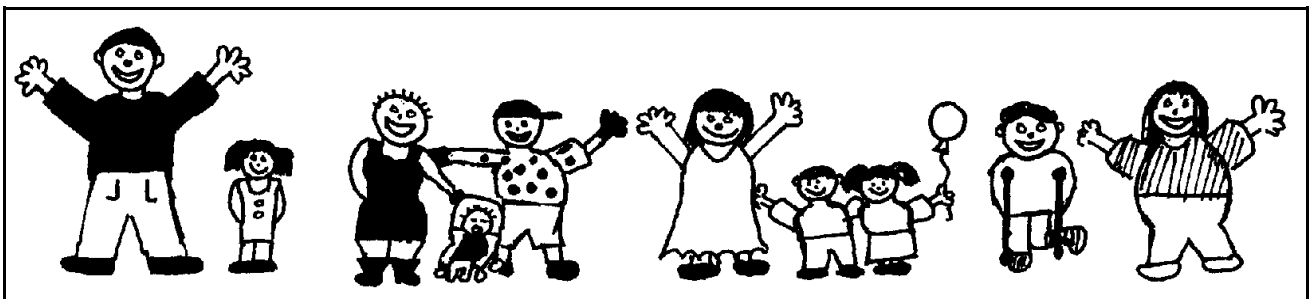
#### Extra and Essential Services to Patients and Their Primary Clinics

Primary clinics are always notified by letter when their patients are vaccinated at a WIC immunization clinic site. If the patient or parent does not have a primary care clinic, a referral is made to a primary clinic whenever possible. Referrals are also made to social workers to help parents find out if they qualify for government medical assistance or for help in finding a primary care clinic.

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The Immunization Action Coalition, a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, works to boost immunization rates. The Coalition promotes physician, community, and family awareness of, and responsibility for, appropriate immunization of all people of all ages against all vaccine-preventable diseases. The Coalition produces and distributes, *NEEDLE TIPS & the Hepatitis B Coalition News*, videos, audiocassette tapes, and many other printed materials. Please contact the Coalition for additional information.

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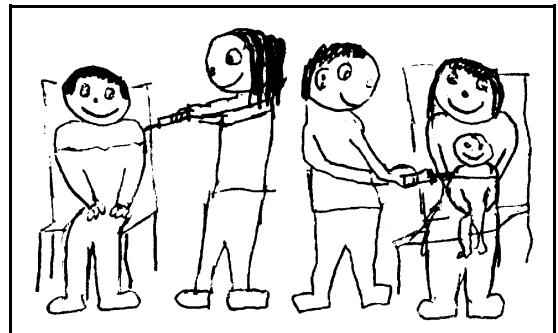
# Giving Immunization Presentations at WIC

by Deborah L. Wexler, MD  
Executive Director, Immunization Action Coalition  
September 1, 1995

## Giving an Immunization Talk to a Group at WIC

### Points to Cover in the Group Presentation

- Introduce yourself by name and position and by whom you are employed.
  - "We are here to talk to everyone in WIC about immunization."
  - "The reason we are here is that half of all 2-year-old children in the United States are behind on their vaccinations and about half of adults in the U.S. are behind on their tetanus booster shots."
  - "We want to help you make sure that you and your children are up to date on all of your vaccinations. If you or your children are behind on shots, we'll give you the shots you need today."
  - "We offer immunizations at WIC clinics because these clinics are conveniently located in your neighborhood."
  - "We offer immunizations at this WIC clinic on all of the coupon "pick-up" days because so many people come here on these days."
  - "This is a public clinic. Anyone can come to this clinic and receive immunizations, adults or children, whether they are on WIC or not."
  - "You can bring in your entire family, children and adults, all at one time. No appointments are needed. This is a walk-in clinic."
  - "Shots are offered for a donation or free for anyone who isn't covered by insurance."
  - "If you have an insurance card, please bring it with you when you come in for shots. If you don't have an insurance card with you today, that's okay. We'll still vaccinate you and your children if shots are needed today."
  - "We will review all of your family members' shot records and vaccinate you right now, or we will give you a piece of paper saying which shots the adults and children in your family need or when they are next due."
  - "You can bring your shot records and your children's shot records in at any time, and we will tell you when you need shots."
- Other points to emphasize in your presentation:
- Immunization starts at birth; always carry a shot record whenever you go to a doctor, hospital, or WIC; ask for a personal record of the vaccination whenever you receive a shot (even if you left your shot card at home); you need a shot card for entrance to daycare, kindergarten, junior high, and post-secondary schools; know when the next shots are due; well child visits are important and shot clinics don't substitute for well child visits; children need to be vaccinated for measles as soon as they are 12 months old; adults need vaccinations, too.
- Special talks you can give at WIC:
- Give a talk on the various vaccine-preventable diseases. (The Coalition sells a set of thirty slides as well as a 3-ring notebook with nineteen 8" x 10" color photographs showing pictures of children and adults with all of the vaccine-preventable diseases.)
  - Give a talk on the immunization schedule for children and adults.



## Talking To Parents One at a Time About Immunizations at WIC

Questions to Ask Parents During One-on-One Discussions (Make sure you walk around the waiting area in WIC and talk to people individually about their vaccinations.)

- "Are YOU (meaning the parent) up to date on your shots? Have you had a tetanus vaccination in the past ten years?" (This question breaks the ice with parents.)
- "How is your child doing on his/her vaccinations?" (Caution: Many parents who think their children are up to date are mistaken. The next three questions will help you get a better idea if the child might need shots.)
  - "How old is your child?"
  - "Has he/she gone in lately for any shots?"
  - "What did the doctor say about her/his shots?"
- "When was your child's last well-child check?"
- "Where do your children go for shots?"
- "Do you have any of your children's shot records with you today? May I see them?" (Review the record with the adult. If the parent does not have a shot card and you suspect that the child is behind on shots, call the child's clinic and get the child's shot records. Make sure to make a copy of the shot record for the parent. If you can't get the child's record, vaccinate the child based on the parent's history. An educated guess is better than completely withholding vaccinations from children who are likely behind. Even if the child is not present, find out as much as possible about his or her immunization status.)
- "Let me show you what shots children need." (Review a copy of the pediatric immunization schedule with the parent.)
- "Do you have shot cards at home for all of your children? Would you be willing to bring them to WIC next time so that we can make sure your children don't need shots at this time? If you have health insurance, could you bring your insurance card, too?"
- "If you have any questions about immunizations, please ask us. We are here every..." (Tell them when you are at WIC to give shots.)

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# WEST SIDE CLINIC IMMUNIZATION RECORD

New \_\_\_\_\_ Account number \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_  
 Last name \_\_\_\_\_ First name \_\_\_\_\_ M.I. \_\_\_\_\_ DOB: mo \_\_\_\_\_ day \_\_\_\_\_ year \_\_\_\_\_ M \_\_\_\_\_ F \_\_\_\_\_

Mother's name: \_\_\_\_\_ Father's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mother's DOB: mo \_\_\_\_\_ day \_\_\_\_\_ year \_\_\_\_\_ Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Apt.#: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Emergency phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Insurance #: \_\_\_\_\_ Clinic: \_\_\_\_\_ Ethnicity: \_\_\_\_\_

Vaccine	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date
<b>DTaP ( DTP)</b>						
<b>Hib</b>						
<b>DTaP/Hib (DTP-Hib)</b>						
<b>Td</b>						
<b>Polio</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> IPV <input type="checkbox"/> OPV	<input type="checkbox"/> IPV <input type="checkbox"/> OPV	<input type="checkbox"/> IPV <input type="checkbox"/> OPV	<input type="checkbox"/> IPV <input type="checkbox"/> OPV	<input type="checkbox"/> IPV <input type="checkbox"/> OPV	<input type="checkbox"/> IPV <input type="checkbox"/> OPV
<b>MMR</b>						
<b>Hep-B</b>						
<b>Varicella</b>						
<b>Other</b>						

## VISIT RECORD

DATE						
Age (in yrs. & mos.)						
Sick today?/temperature?						
Allergies?						
Pregnant?						
Serious medical problems in patient or immunosuppressed person in household? anyone on steroids?						
Previous seizure/neuro problem?						
Past shot reaction?						
Past transfusion or I-globulin?						
All shots listed?						
Records requested?						
Vaccine info sheets given?						
Document the reason if not giving all recommended shots today (continue on back)						
Referred for well child care?						
RTC date						
Which vaccinations needed on RTC?						
Signature						

# CLINIC NOTIFICATION LETTER

West Side Community Health Center • 153 Concord St. • St. Paul, MN 55107 • 651/222-1816

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Dear doctor or nurse at \_\_\_\_\_Clinic:

The West Side Community Health Center provided immunization services today to the person named below, at our WIC-based immunization clinic. He or she identified you as his or her primary care provider. A shot record was filled out and given to the patient. Please update your patient's clinic chart to include the immunization information below.

**Patient's name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Patient's birthdate:** \_\_\_\_\_

(Mother's name: \_\_\_\_\_)

(Mother's birthdate: \_\_\_\_\_)

Date vaccine(s) administered: \_\_\_\_\_

WIC site location:     McDonough Homes     West Side Clinic

## The vaccines given today were:

Vaccine	Dose #	Brand	Vaccine	Dose #	Brand	Dosage
DTaP (DTP)	_____	_____	Hepatitis B	_____	_____	_____mcg
DTaP-Hib (DTP-Hib)	_____	_____	Hep B-Hib	_____	_____	_____mcg
Hib	_____	_____	MMR	_____	_____	
DT	_____	_____	Varicella	_____	_____	
Td	_____	_____	Influenza	_____	_____	
IPV	_____	_____	Pneumococcal	_____	_____	
OPV	_____	_____	Hepatitis A	_____	_____	_____

Sincerely,

Staff member  
West Side Community Health Center



# West Side Clinic's Community-Based Immunization Clinic Checklist

## VACCINES TO BRING

- \_\_\_\_\_DTaP
- \_\_\_\_\_Td
- \_\_\_\_\_IPV
- \_\_\_\_\_OPV *(Remember to mark this vaccine as "Use First" when returned to clinic. It must be used first because it has been thawed and refrozen.)*
  
- \_\_\_\_\_Hib
- \_\_\_\_\_MMR
- \_\_\_\_\_Hepatitis B
- \_\_\_\_\_Hepatitis A
- \_\_\_\_\_Pneumococcal
- \_\_\_\_\_Influenza - in season
- \_\_\_\_\_Varicella

### Storage Notes:

- Put one layer of ice on bottom of cooler, then one layer of ice on top of vaccines.
- Put OPV close to the bottom ice. OPV is the only vaccine that should be frozen. The rest must be kept as close to a normal refrigerator temperature as possible. No bottles should directly touch ice because they could freeze. Keep the other vaccines in their original boxes when stored in the cooler.
- When Varicella is taken to community-based clinics, pack it in dry ice.

## IMMUNIZATION SUPPLIES

- \_\_\_\_\_2 Sharps Away containers
- \_\_\_\_\_1 box of 3cc syringes with 1", 25g needles
- \_\_\_\_\_25 gauge needles
  - \_\_\_\_\_5/8"
  - \_\_\_\_\_1"
  - \_\_\_\_\_1 1/2"
- \_\_\_\_\_1 box of latex gloves
- \_\_\_\_\_alcohol wipes
- \_\_\_\_\_spot bandaids
- \_\_\_\_\_rectangle bandaids
- \_\_\_\_\_rectal thermometer
- \_\_\_\_\_oral thermometer
- \_\_\_\_\_probe covers for thermometer
- \_\_\_\_\_3 table pads -- clean paper to cover table for clean site
- \_\_\_\_\_one cloth towel
- \_\_\_\_\_paper towels
- \_\_\_\_\_bleach solution
- \_\_\_\_\_spray bottle for bleach solution
- \_\_\_\_\_acetaminophen elixir samples
- \_\_\_\_\_acetaminophen drops samples
- \_\_\_\_\_acetaminophen chewables 80mg
- \_\_\_\_\_acetaminophen adult tablets

## VACCINE INFORMATION STATEMENTS (VISs)

- |            |            |                            |
|------------|------------|----------------------------|
| _____DTaP  | _____Td    | _____MMR                   |
| _____Polio | _____Var   | _____Pneumococcal          |
| _____Hib   | _____Hep B | _____Influenza (in season) |
| _____Hep A |            |                            |

## EMERGENCY KIT

- \_\_\_\_\_Standing orders for emergencies
- \_\_\_\_\_2 amps - Epinephrine 1:1000 SQ
- \_\_\_\_\_2 amps - Benadryl 50 mg IM
- \_\_\_\_\_two 3cc syringes with 1", 25g needle attached  
(continued next column)

Emergency Kit continued...

- \_\_\_\_\_two 1 1/2" needles
- \_\_\_\_\_2 tuberculin syringes with 5/8" needle, for Epi
- \_\_\_\_\_alcohol swabs
- \_\_\_\_\_pediatric pocket mask with one-way valve
- \_\_\_\_\_adult pocket mask with one-way valve
- \_\_\_\_\_2 tongue depressors
- \_\_\_\_\_pediatric airway
- \_\_\_\_\_adult airway
- \_\_\_\_\_tourniquet

## PAPERWORK AND OFFICE SUPPLIES

- \_\_\_\_\_Immunization Clinic Standing Orders & Protocols
- \_\_\_\_\_this materials checklist
- \_\_\_\_\_ "Summary of rules for childhood immunization"
- \_\_\_\_\_ "Summary of recommendations for adult immunization"
- \_\_\_\_\_encounter forms
- \_\_\_\_\_immunization encounter tally sheets
- \_\_\_\_\_CLINIC RECORD CARDS--PATIENT CHARTS
- \_\_\_\_\_Minnesota personal immunization cards
- \_\_\_\_\_tiny 'post-its' for return appt times
- \_\_\_\_\_notification letters to other clinics
- \_\_\_\_\_release of information forms
- \_\_\_\_\_envelopes
- \_\_\_\_\_childhood/adult vaccination schedules
- \_\_\_\_\_prestamped acetaminophen Rx blanks
  - \_\_\_\_\_elixir
  - \_\_\_\_\_drops
  - \_\_\_\_\_children's chewables
  - \_\_\_\_\_adults
  - \_\_\_\_\_blank prescription pads
- \_\_\_\_\_dosage schedules to hand out to patients (Spanish also)
- \_\_\_\_\_list of metro clinics and phone numbers
- \_\_\_\_\_calendar
- \_\_\_\_\_extra pens
- \_\_\_\_\_rubber bands
- \_\_\_\_\_tape
- \_\_\_\_\_paper clips
- \_\_\_\_\_stapler/staples
- \_\_\_\_\_scissors
- \_\_\_\_\_telephone
- \_\_\_\_\_vaccine adverse events reporting sheets

## MISCELLANEOUS MATERIALS

- \_\_\_\_\_list of community resources
- \_\_\_\_\_toys
- \_\_\_\_\_stickers
- \_\_\_\_\_other:
- \_\_\_\_\_other:

## CLINICIAN ITEMS (if one will be present)

- \_\_\_\_\_otoscope
- \_\_\_\_\_stethoscope
- \_\_\_\_\_good light source
- \_\_\_\_\_tongue depressors
- \_\_\_\_\_container of clean ear specula, different sizes
- \_\_\_\_\_professional cards

# WIC Clinics Are Wonderful Places to Immunize!

Doua, with her infant daughter and older son, has just walked into the McDonough Community Center in her neighborhood to pick up coupons for eggs, cereal, milk, and other food items. Doua and her children are enrolled in a federal food program called Women, Infants and Children, or the WIC program. Once a month Doua comes to this center to pick up these food coupons.

Doua takes a number, sits down, and waits to be called. While she is waiting, Mai Yang, a Hmong nurse from the West Side Clinic, greets her and asks her how she is and if her children need any shots. Doua is surprised because she thought shots had to be given at her doctor's office.

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Doua is surprised because she thought shots had to be given at her doctor's office.

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Mai tells Doua how important shots are for her children and that the St. Paul Health Department is trying to make sure all the children get their immunizations on time.

Mai, noticing that the mother is somewhat reticent, tries a bit harder to convince her how important shots are for her children. She tells Doua that many Hmong children were infected with the measles in 1990 because so many children didn't have their shots. She talks about her own children and their shot histories.

Doua finally tells Mai that her infant daughter does need some shots but she doesn't know how many. Her son might need some shots, too, but she doesn't know for sure. It's so difficult to know what shots are needed, Doua says.

Mai agrees with her and admits even some health care workers have a hard time remembering the schedule for shots.

Doua says she missed her baby's last appointment at the doctor's office because her son was sick. She hasn't made another appointment, she says, because the person who acts as her interpreter and accompanies her to the doctor has moved. Doua says she does not speak English and no one at her current medical clinic speaks Hmong.

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Immunization clinics at WIC sites were set up in St. Paul in response to the measles epidemic of 1990.

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Mai tells the mother not to worry because the immunization team will call the doctor's office and find out what shots her baby and son need and that they will be able to get the needed shots today. Doua

thanks Mai and tells her she will come to the immunization area as soon as she picks up her WIC coupons.

Doua is just one of thousands of people who have been served at St. Paul's immunization clinics located at neighborhood WIC sites. The City of St. Paul has approximately 13,000 people enrolled in WIC and of these, approximately 8,000 pick up their WIC coupons at neighborhood WIC sites.

"Immunization clinics at WIC sites were set up in St. Paul in response to the measles epidemic of 1990," says Anne Kuettel, PHN, who is in charge of setting up these clinics and has been involved in working at all of them.

"The number of clients we are now serving and the number of shots we are now giving," Kuettel says, "has increased significantly since we began."

In 1991, there were neighborhood immunization clinics at the WIC sites located at McDonough Homes, the West Side Community Health Center, and Dayton Avenue Presbyterian Church. During that year, 138 half-day clinics were held, at which 1,122 clients received a total of 2,472 doses of vaccine.

In 1992, the numbers increased dramatically. During this year, 227 half-day clinics were held at which 3,361 clients received a total of 6,274 doses of vaccine and a fourth immunization clinic was opened at the WIC site at Arlington Hills Presbyterian Church. 1992 showed a significant increase over 1991 in people served and shots given. In 1992, the number of half-day clinics increased 64%, the number of client visits showed an increase of 199%, and the number of doses of vaccine given increased by 154%.

**Immunization Services Provided at WIC Sites**

Year	# of clinics	# of visits	Doses of vaccine given
1991	138	1122	2472
1992	227	3361	6274
% 1	64%	199%	154%

Dr. Deborah Wexler, who directs three of St. Paul's neighborhood immunization clinics and is a family physician at West Side Community Health Center, says immunization clinics are a lifesaver for people like Doua.

"Immunization clinics at neighborhood WIC sites," Wexler says, "eliminate all kinds of barriers that many people can't overcome. Barriers like lack of transportation, inconvenient and sometimes impossible clinic hours, no primary doctor, no health

insurance, language differences, no reminders from physicians, and insurance companies that won't cover immunizations."

These immunization clinics in St. Paul, located in the neighborhoods they serve, are all run by federally funded community health centers on a walk-in basis and shots are given for a donation or free to those who have no insurance. The clinics also make referrals to physician offices for children who have no primary care provider or who need their well child checks.

Wexler and Kuettel, who are understandably proud of the success of these clinics, stop talking as Doua and her children approach the immunization area with Mai.

While Wexler calls to Doua's physician's office to find out what shots her children have had, Kuettel explains that Minnesota has eliminated a huge barrier for immunization clinic staff. During the 1992 legislative session, she says, a law was passed that gives clinics, schools, public health agencies and hospitals access to immunization records over the telephone without a written release of information.

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A 1992 Minnesota law gives clinics, public health agencies, and hospitals access to immunization records over the telephone without a written release of information.

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Wexler finds out that Doua's baby needs a third hepatitis B shot, a third DTP, and a third Hib vaccine. Her boy needs his third hepatitis B and his fourth DTP vaccines.

At the end of the morning, Wexler, Kuettel and Yang total up the number of visits and immunizations given.

"We had a great morning," Wexler says. "Twenty visits and 35 immunizations. Let's go to lunch."

# WORKING THE CROWD...

## West Side Community Health Center's Key to Successful Immunization

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It's Wednesday morning and the room at the McDonough Community Center is full of parents and children. Everyone is waiting to pick up their WIC coupons.

Dr. Deborah Wexler of the West Side Community Health Center is seated beside a Hmong gentleman who is waiting for his number to be called.

"Nyonb Zoo. Kuv lub npe hu ua Dr. Deborah Wexler," she says.

"Nyonb Zoo," the gentleman replies with a smile of surprise at hearing the doctor trying to speak his language.

Dr. Wexler attempts to continue the conversation in Hmong but can't remember the word for "children."

The gentleman supplies her with the correct word. "Menyuam," he says, smiling even bigger now.

By this time, Wexler has motioned for MayLee Vang to join her and help her ask the gentleman if he and his family have received all of their immunizations including hepatitis B shots.

Yes, he explains, his family is all up to date. But after further gentle questioning from Wexler it is discovered that the man himself has not received his third dose of dT (diphtheria/tetanus) and that his children probably have not received hepatitis B vaccinations.

He decides it would be a good idea to get his vaccination right there and then. Dr. Wexler smiles, says, "Good," in Hmong, and moves on to a mother and her three children in the next chairs.

In the next two and one-half hours, West Side's "Vaccination in Action" team (Dr. Wexler; MayLee Vang, medical assistant; Mai Tria Lee, clerical staff, all of West Side Community Health Center; and Anne

Kuettel, PHN, from St. Paul Division of Public Health) will vaccinate 20 children, 5 adults, and draw 6 hepatitis B panels.

Forty-five shots and 6 panels in two and one-half hours is considered a success by almost anyone. How do they do it?

If you go to the clinic and watch this energetic team in action you might think the secret is Wexler's passion for vaccination.

Or could it be Vang who does everything including educating early arrivals about immunizations, drawing blood, interpreting, negotiating with parents on how many shots the parents will permit on one visit (children are seen often who need 5 different vaccines) explaining medicines, handing out coloring books, and comforting children.

Or is it Kuettel the nurse who gives the shots in her kind and concerned way, or Kuettel the WIC Well Child program coordinator who cuts through the red tape that could stop this team in their tracks.

But the team is quick to tell you the biggest reason for their success other than the accessibility of the clinic for the patient and the cultural sensitivity of the staff is that they will always continue questioning a parent even after the parent replies, "Yes, my children have all their shots."

The staff knows from experience that in every family someone is behind on vaccinations...

If you listen you can hear that the questioning is gentle and sensitive. The staff keeps on questioning because they say they all know from experience that almost every family has a missing shot

somewhere, and they are determined to find it. And if you are there when they find it, you feel as though they are going to yell out "Bingo!"

Consider the record. The McDonough WIC immunization clinic has impressive stats. A total of 616 visits were made to the clinic in 1991 to receive vaccination or hepatitis B testing on Wednesday mornings. A total of 1466 doses of vaccine have been given to those individuals. Over 90% of those using the clinic are Hmong.

If your clinic or hospital is thinking of opening an immunization clinic, please feel free to come out to McDonough and watch the "Vaccination in Action" team. Maybe you can pick up some pointers!

McDonough Community Center is located at 1544 Timberlake Road and is open the first four Wednesday mornings of the month from 8:30 to 11 a.m. Call 222-1816 for more information.