

# IMMUNIZATION UNIT STRATEGIC PLAN





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# Leadership Message

Dear Colleagues and North Dakotans,

On behalf of the ND HHS Immunization Unit, I am excited to share the 2025-2030 North Dakota Immunization Strategic Plan. This Strategic Plan is a living document that will guide the work of the Immunization Unit and our partners over the next five years in alignment with the North Dakota State Health Improvement Plan. We look forward to putting the Strategic Plan into action in collaboration with our partners to help ensure all North Dakotans have access to immunizations to protect their health.

Immunizations are the best tool available to ensure people of all ages and backgrounds can live longer, healthier lives, and they protect our communities from harmful diseases. This plan aims to leverage partnerships in ways that are actionable, measurable and have a meaningful impact for community members.

By putting this plan into action, we will strive to continue to protect the health of North Dakotans by leveraging trusted messengers in the community, maintaining existing immunization infrastructure, enhancing immunization-related communications, and increasing reminders for immunizations. This would not be possible without the dedication of the staff within the ND HHS Immunization Unit and our partner organizations. Join us over the next five years to work to ensure all North Dakotans have awareness of and access to immunizations.



Thank you,  
Molly Howell, MPH  
*Immunization Director*



***Dirk Wilke, J.D., M.B.A., Interim Commissioner, Executive Director of Public Health, North Dakota Health and Human Services:***

"As the Interim Commissioner and Executive Director of Public Health at ND Health and Human Services, I wholeheartedly support the vision and mission of our 2025-2030 Immunization Strategic Plan. This plan is designed to enhance vaccine confidence, raise awareness about vaccination schedules across demographic groups, and ensure continued access to essential vaccines. The success of this plan hinges on strong collaboration and partnership among all stakeholders, as working together will enable us to effectively implement strategies that benefit our communities.

As Benjamin Franklin once said, 'An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.' By focusing on these priority areas, we aim to create a healthier community through informed choices and proactive engagement. Together, we can inspire meaningful change and maximize the benefits of immunization for all North Dakotans."



***Kylie Hall, MPH, Operations Director - North Dakota State University (NDSU) Center for Immunization Research and Education (CIRE):***

"Dr. Walter Orenstein, a nationally-recognized vaccine expert, once said, 'Vaccines don't save lives. Vaccinations save lives.' Over the next five years, the North Dakota Department of Health and Human Services Immunization Unit and its partners will work towards many ambitious immunization goals to ensure that North Dakotans can live healthy lives by staying current with their wellness immunizations. The work outlined in this strategic plan will require an all-hands-on-deck approach, from health care providers, to non-profits, to academia, to state government and everyone in between.

The North Dakota State University Center for Immunization Research and Education stands together with the North Dakota Department of Health and Human Services Immunization Unit as we work towards the goals in this strategic plan. We acknowledge the challenges that lie ahead and the hard work that will be required, but as President Theodore Roosevelt noted, 'Far and away the best prize that life offers is the chance to work hard at work worth doing.' Join us as we work to keep North Dakotans healthy and free from vaccine-preventable disease; it is certainly work worth doing."



***Sandra Tibke, Executive Director, Foundation for a Healthy North Dakota:***

"The Foundation for a Healthy North Dakota (FHND) recognizes that the well-being of communities, families, and individuals is vital to the success of our state. That's why we collaborate with communities to provide digital resources, effective communication strategies, and reliable information about community health. FHND proudly supports the 2025-2030 Immunization Strategic Plan, as evidence demonstrates that vaccination is a safe and effective way to enhance individual and community health. Boosting vaccine confidence, awareness, and access to routinely recommended vaccinations is a proven public health strategy that will help North Dakota progress toward becoming the healthiest state in the nation. Through collaborative efforts, we can prevent illness and ensure everyone has access to the resources needed to lead healthy, fulfilling lives—whether at home, school, work, or within our faith communities. When our communities thrive in good health, we all flourish, enjoying lives free from the burdens of illness."



# Strategic Plan Overview

The North Dakota (ND) Health and Human Services (HHS) Immunization Unit developed a five-year Immunization Strategic Plan to enhance immunization coverage and reduce vaccine-preventable diseases in North Dakota (State). The data-driven Strategic Plan identifies the ND HHS Immunization Unit's priority areas, objectives, and evidence-based strategies to support achieving these objectives.

The overarching vision of the ND HHS Immunization Strategic Plan is **to create a healthier, happier state where all North Dakotans, young and old, are up to date with wellness immunizations**. The adoption of this central vision for the ND HHS Immunization Strategic Plan (2025-2030) was key for helping to ensure the Strategic Plan's connection to the Immunization Unit's long-term goals. The vision serves as a guide and motivation for all components of the Strategic Plan and represents what the Strategic Plan and the overall ND HHS Immunization Unit aspire to achieve through its implementation.

To achieve the vision, the Strategic Plan strives to achieve the following goals:

- Define priority areas in alignment with State and national priorities, as well as the collective input and perspectives of ND HHS staff, partners, providers, and community members.
- Establish objectives that improve vaccine access, confidence, and awareness across all populations in ND.
- Identify evidence-based strategies to support vaccine uptake and address barriers to immunization.
- Enhance effective collaboration between ND HHS, organizational partners, and providers in implementing strategies and monitoring progress.



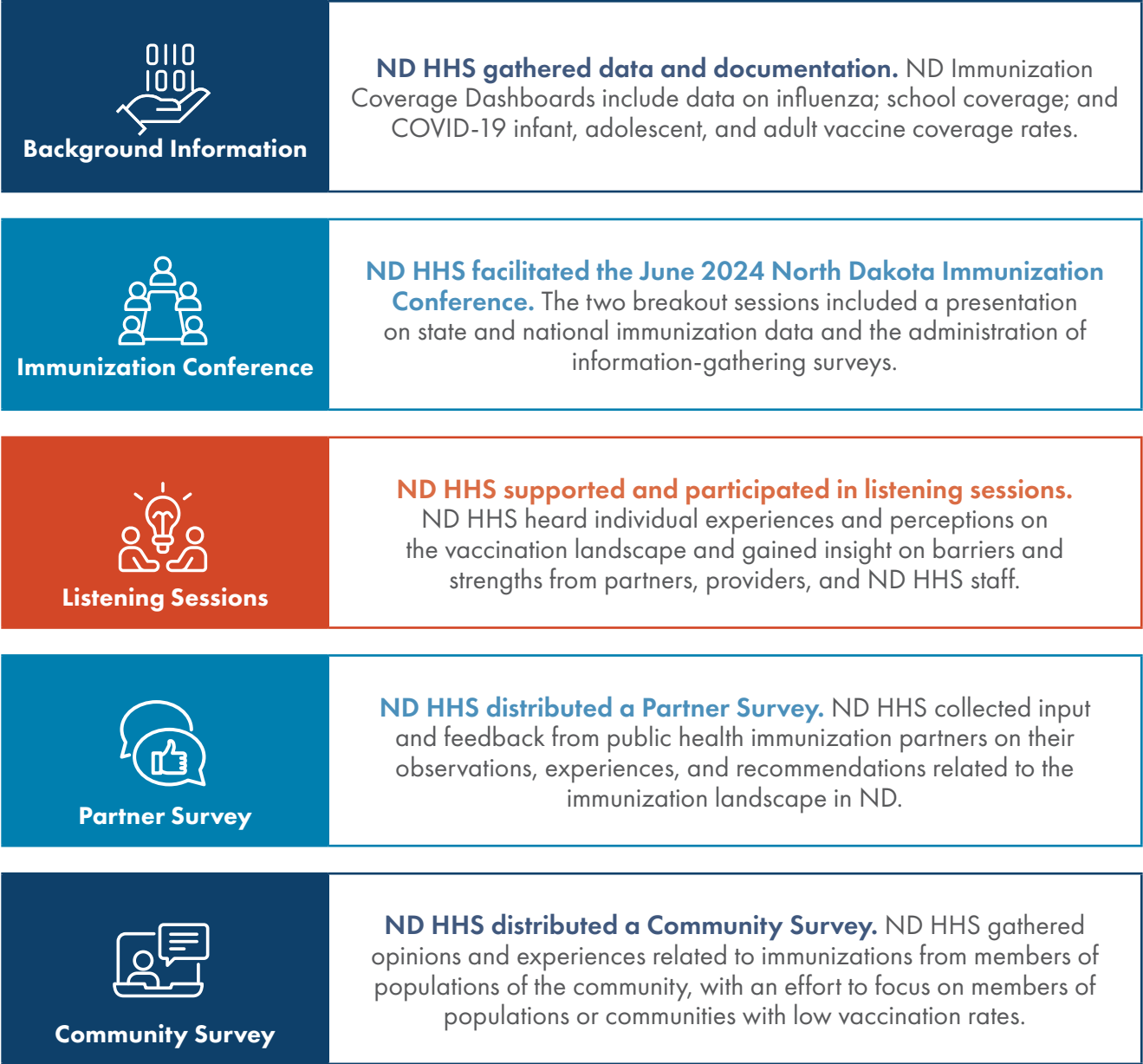
As part of the Strategic Plan development process, ND HHS conducted several information-gathering activities to enhance the understanding of ND's current immunization landscape and identify barriers and facilitators for vaccine access and uptake across the state. The data collection processes from June to October 2024 included both qualitative and quantitative data from ND HHS staff, the public, immunization partners, and other interested parties through five virtual listening sessions, an online community survey, an online organizational partners and providers survey, and engagement activities at the June 2024 ND Immunization Conference. The partners engaged in the listening sessions and partner survey, and the immunization conference included ND HHS staff, local public health departments, health systems, federally qualified health centers (FQHCs), pharmacies, tribal health providers, institutions of higher education, long-term care facilities, and community-based organizations.

Additionally, the Immunization Unit leadership convened and created a Strategic Plan Steering Committee (Steering Committee) to provide guidance in the development and execution of the five-year Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan Steering Committee analyzed and reviewed the findings of qualitative and quantitative data collection efforts to identify areas of opportunity or improvement to address through the Strategic Plan. Through

data and collaboration, the committee developed seven objectives and 18 strategies to support each of the three identified priority areas. The Steering Committee is committed to monitoring progress and outcomes and supporting the implementation of the selected evidence-based strategies.

Below is a summary of information-gathering activities conducted for the Strategic Plan:

Figure 1: Summary of Information-gathering Activities





# Priorities, Objectives, and Strategies

As a result of the data collection and analysis process described above, the Steering Committee developed the priority areas, objectives, and strategies that comprise the Strategic Plan. The priority areas describe the overarching desired outcomes or intentions for the implementation of the Strategic Plan, which are expressed as high-level statements of improvement.

Within each priority area are several objectives. The objectives are specific, measurable, actionable, relevant, and time-bound goals that need to be achieved to address each established priority area. Strategies are plans or interventions that are carried out to achieve an objective. The Steering Committee carefully selected, refined, and adapted evidence-based interventions to be applicable in ND's landscape.



## Priority Areas Summary

Figure 2: Strategic Plan Priority Areas



### Priority Area One

Increase confidence in recommended immunizations



### Priority Area Two


Increase awareness across demographic groups about when to get recommended immunizations



### Priority Area Three

Maintain and expand access to recommended immunizations

Table 1: Objectives and Strategies

PRIORITY AREA ONE	 Increase confidence in recommended immunizations
<b>Objective 1.1:</b> Enhance provider confidence in discussing immunization recommendations and safety to maintain and increase immunization rates.	
Strategy 1.1.1	Create, maintain, and enhance webinars and other web-based educational opportunities for providers, including opportunities designed to address frequently asked questions from providers and those featuring specific vignettes and examples for responding to questions or objections.
Strategy 1.1.2	Create and disseminate immunization communication guidance resources to providers, including toolkits for providers' use and educational resources to be sent home with patients. Monitor use/distribution of resources.
<b>Objective 1.2:</b> Decrease non-medical vaccine exemptions for kindergarten children from 6% to 4% as evidenced by the annual school survey over the five-year Strategic Plan period.	
Strategy 1.2.1	Implement interventions to reach and educate pregnant women through vaccine education classes, incorporating vaccine education into birthing classes, and providing education to Obstetrician-gynecologist (OB-GYN) and pediatric providers on how to effectively discuss infant immunizations with pregnant patients.
Strategy 1.2.2	Provide resources to schools and childcare sites for distribution to parents and provide enhanced guidance and resources for schools to promote and collect immunization data.
<b>Objective 1.3:</b> Increase uptake of the five immunizations with lowest uptake as identified annually among vulnerable groups and populations of focus (adolescents, older adults, pregnant women).	
Strategy 1.3.1	Leverage partnerships and collaboration with community-based organizations, the ND Long-Term Care Association, the North Dakota Pharmacy Association, aging services groups, tribal organizations, New American groups, immigrant groups, and other partners as appropriate, to promote and increase reach by hosting vaccine clinics at accessible locations.
Strategy 1.3.2	Monitor immunization coverage rates across demographics to highlight disparities and identify priority outreach areas.
Strategy 1.3.3	Partner with providers to provide reminder/recall letters to parents and patients when due for immunization or newly eligible.





PRIORITY  
AREA TWO



Increase awareness across demographic groups about when to get recommended immunizations

**Objective 2.1:**

Increase awareness across demographic groups of age-specific immunization schedules among families, children, and older adults by measuring immunization coverage rates for specific vaccines and immunization uptake rates for kindergarteners and school coverage rates.

<b>Strategy 2.1.1</b>	Collaborate with schools and childcare sites during kindergarten enrollment and registration to educate parents on recommended vaccine schedules.
<b>Strategy 2.1.2</b>	Collaborate with nurses, pediatricians, family practice/general practitioners, oncologists, cardiologists, OB-GYNs, pharmacists, and other providers to prioritize and provide immunization education during patient visits.

**Objective 2.2:**

Maintain and enhance reminder/recall outreach through expanded provider partnerships and training opportunities.

<b>Strategy 2.2.1</b>	Provide annual trainings to providers on the North Dakota Immunization Information System (NDIIS) reminder/recall system, sharing actual clinic experiences and success stories.
<b>Strategy 2.2.2</b>	Collaborate with health care providers to enhance reminder/recall for patients with high-risk conditions for whom ND HHS is not currently able to conduct reminder/recalls.
<b>Strategy 2.2.3</b>	Collaborate with birthing hospitals to promote consumer access to immunizations and reminder/recall for new parents and pediatricians.

PRIORITY  
AREA THREE



## Maintain and expand access to recommended immunizations

### Objective 3.1:

Maintain the number of Vaccines for Children (VFC) providers (0% net loss) to support access and availability of immunizations.

<b>Strategy 3.1.1</b>	Collaborate with local public health departments to develop strategies for maintaining and expanding the number of VFC providers.
<b>Strategy 3.1.2</b>	Collaborate with VFC providers who have capacity to host immunization events outside of the traditional 8:00 a.m.- 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday schedule.
<b>Strategy 3.1.3</b>	Provide outreach to pharmacies, specialty providers, and family medicine providers not yet enrolled in VFC to educate and promote the program, particularly in more rural communities.
<b>Strategy 3.1.4</b>	Partner with Medicaid to coordinate education and outreach to Medicaid providers about VFC.

### Objective 3.2:

Maintain and enhance partnerships with a minimum of ten Vaccines for Adults (VFA) providers to support increased access to and availability of immunizations to be demonstrated by increased immunization rates in adults in NDHS.

<b>Strategy 3.2.1</b>	Collaborate with local public health departments, FQHCs, pharmacies, and private providers to develop strategies for maintaining and increasing the number of VFA providers.
<b>Strategy 3.2.2</b>	Collaborate with VFA providers to identify ways to make immunizations easily available to those in rural areas and/or with limited access to transportation.



# Action Planning and Monitoring

To help ensure the Strategic Plan is impactful, ND HHS will create detailed action plans to implement the strategies. Monitoring and measuring progress are integral components of action plans to help inform resource management and accountability, as well as allow adjustments toward impactful activities.

The ND HHS Immunization Unit will leverage existing and new partnerships to help develop action plans for each objective and strategy. Action plans will include building upon existing initiatives, identifying key performance indicators, monitoring and measuring for progress, and using data to inform decisions and guide performance to achieve better outcomes.

To monitor and measure progress, the ND HHS Immunization Strategic Planning Committee will form workgroups drawn from the Steering

Committee and external partners to enhance accountability of the strategic objectives, coordinate resources, and effectively leverage feedback from partners, providers, and community members. The Steering Committee will share the Strategic Plan with organizational partners and assign responsibilities and tasks to the workgroups. The Steering Committee will convene on a semi-annual basis to continuously monitor progress and refine the Strategic Plan as needed. The Steering Committee will review the relevant data indicators, pending data availability, and will gather feedback from workgroup leads semi-annually to address barriers and recognize key milestones.

The Strategic Plan will be a dynamic document responsive to changes in ND's immunization landscape and the shifting priorities of North Dakotans.

## Accountability Statement



The ND HHS Immunization Unit is committed to enhancing immunization coverage and reducing vaccine-preventable disease across the state. The development of this five-year Immunization Strategic Plan was driven by data and informed by partners and community members to help ensure ND HHS and its partners' efforts are aligned and inclusive. The Immunization Unit will implement these strategies to achieve the outlined objectives in support of ND HHS' guiding principles:

- Continuous improvement and innovation
- Responsible stewardship
- Transparent and open communication
- Engaged collaboration
- Data-centered decisions

As ND's public health landscape evolves, ND HHS will adjust priorities and resources as needed to help move toward a healthier and happier ND.

# Acknowledgments

We extend our gratitude to all the dedicated public health professionals, partners, providers, and community members who contributed to the development of the 2025-2030 ND Immunization Strategic Plan.

Members of the ND HHS Immunization Strategic Planning Steering Committee provided leadership and guidance throughout the development of the Strategic Plan. We extend special thanks to the following individuals and organizations for their time, efforts, and commitment to the health and well-being of all North Dakotans:

Table 2: Acknowledgments

Member	Organization	Title
Abbi Berg	ND HHS	VFC/Quality Improvement Manager
Jennifer Galbraith	ND HHS	Adult Immunization Manager
Mary Woinarowicz	ND HHS	NDIIS Manager
Danni Pinnick	ND HHS	Immunization Surveillance Coordinator
Sandra Tibke	Foundation for a Healthy North Dakota	Executive Director
Mary Lizakowski	Foundation for a Healthy North Dakota	Coalition Health Director
Kylie Hall	NDSU CIRE	Operations Director
Lynde Monson	ND HHS	Public Health Advisor



# Appendix A:

## Glossary of Acronyms and Terms

Table A1 will provide a list of acronyms and terms used in the report.

Table A1: Glossary of Acronyms and Terms

Acronym	Definition
CIRE	Center for Immunization Research and Education
FHND	Foundation for a Healthy North Dakota
FQHC	Federally Qualified Health Centers
HHS	Health and Human Services
ND	North Dakota
NDIIS	ND Immunization Information System
NDSU	North Dakota State University
OB-GYN	Obstetrician-gynecologist
VFA	Vaccines for Adults
VFC	Vaccines for Children

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