

# Advancing immunization data access in Vermont: retrieving Vermont Immunization Registry records through an EHR improves immunization record completeness and reduces manual work



## CHALLENGES FOR PRIMARY CARE HEALTH PARTNERS:

- Significant time spent manually accessing and logging in to separate systems for up-to-date patient immunization records
- Difficulty onboarding new patients due to gaps in immunization history
- Missing data for patients receiving immunizations at locations other than the medical office i.e. pharmacies or pop-up locations

## SOLUTION

Using VITL's Vermont Immunization Registry Query & Response service, Primary Care Health Partners (PCHP) can access current immunization records through the electronic health record (EHR) with the click of a button

## RESULTS

- Significant reduction of time and effort spent by staff and nurses tracking down immunization history for patients
- Quicker and more seamless onboarding of new patients
- More effective forecasting of immunization due dates to help patients can stay up-to-date

## VITL'S IMMUNIZATION REGISTRY QUERY & RESPONSE SERVICE BY THE NUMBERS

- Majority of PCHP staff access immunization records daily through their EHR via VITL's Query & Response Service
- PCHP estimates that their nurses save more than one hour and 20 minutes per day by having access to VITL's service
- Statewide 88% of immunization data in the Health Department's Vermont Immunization Registry is delivered to the Vermont Immunization Registry through VITL

## CASE STUDY

### HIGH-QUALITY, PERSONALIZED CARE FOR VERMONTERS

**Primary Care Health Partners** (PCHP) was created in January 2000 by a group of primary care physicians specializing in family medicine, internal medicine, and pediatrics. With practices throughout Vermont and upstate New York, PCHP is the largest privately-owned primary care medical group in the state of Vermont, with a focus on compassion, collaboration, prevention, and wellness.

PCHP incorporates a team-based approach to comprehensive, coordinated, and accessible care with accountability for quality and safety. They focus on education and self-management tools to help patients take an active role in their health and well-being.

As an independent, physician-owned model for integrated quality health care, the clinic's vision is to stay at the forefront of primary care using an evidence-based approach while embracing quality improvement tools and new technologies. They work collaboratively to provide high quality health care and believe that through this work they can enhance the well-being of their patients and the quality of health in the communities they serve.

### VITL AND THE VERMONT DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH PARTNER FOR EFFICIENT ACCESS TO COMPLETE IMMUNIZATION DATA

The Vermont Department of Health and Vitl share the goal of improving access to the immunization data providers need to help Vermonters stay healthy. And both organizations aim to make this access as efficient as possible for busy practices. Together, they envisioned a new way for providers to access the Health Department's immunization records – pulling those records directly into their own EHR. The organizations

partnered to develop the Immunization Registry Query & Response Service to streamline access to this essential data.

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**“Immunizations are crucial for preventing the spread of infectious diseases,” says Amanda Jones, Informatics Director at the Vermont Department of Health. “The Vermont Immunization Registry gives health care providers easy access to individual vaccination records and forecasts future patient immunization needs — this technology is keeping people in Vermont up to date on vaccines and really protecting our communities.”**

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An important component of any primary care provider's practice is to ensure vaccines are available to all patients when they need them. However, accessing and integrating immunization records had been a manual process, requiring daily administrative work of busy practice staff. “The registry was a huge and important tool during the pandemic. I would print the lists of our patients that had the COVID vaccine, so that I could document the vaccines in our EHR,” says Bonnie Krawczyk Tripp, of PCHP. “We would have been lost without it.” This was an essential effort, but also manual and time-consuming, requiring multiple steps

and logins to separate systems. PCHP needed a solution to efficiently integrate Vermont Immunization Registry data in their own EHR.

“There was some frustration on behalf of the provider as accessing immunization records required a physical body to log into the [Vermont Immunization] Registry’s website to get the information and then manually update our system. And that’s time consuming,” says Becky Senesac, of PCHP. “Especially During COVID, that was an arduous process because there were so many places where vaccinations were being given that we didn’t have access to such as pop-up sites.”

With the new VITL service, PCHP clinical staff no longer have to log directly into the Vermont Immunization Registry for current records but can pull that information into their EHR with the click of a button. That means regardless of whether a provider is seeing a new patient, or if an established patient has gotten an immunization at the local CVS or Kinney Drugs, they can quickly pull that information into the patient’s record.

Additionally, the query will tell PCHP staff which immunizations patients will be due for in the future, streamlining operations.

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**“From a user standpoint, VITL’s interface has saved so much time with manual data entry and error prevention.”**

**– Ona Johnston, Medical Office Administrator, Brattleboro Primary Care (Member of PCHP)**

## **SUPPORTING A HEALTHY COMMUNITY**

The Vermont Immunization Registry is an essential tool for helping to keep Vermont families healthy and up to date on their immunizations. Working with VITL’s Query & Response Service further elevates the Registry’s accessibility by increasing efficiency and giving precious time back to providers and practice staff who would otherwise have to track down missing immunization data and then manually pull it from the Registry and enter it into their own EHR.

“We often have new patients come in that cannot track down their immunization records, and we have many senior patients that get a vaccine at a pharmacy and can’t remember what it was,” says Bonnie. “The Query & Response tool saves our staff from having to make phone calls.”

## **VITL HELPS DELIVER IMMUNIZATION RECORD TRANSPARENCY**

Immunizations are an effective public health intervention and ensuring that patients vaccination data is up to date and accurate is key to keeping Vermonters healthy.

“Being able to clearly discuss vaccines needed, particularly with our adult population has been a game changer,” says Ona Johnston, Medical Office Administrator at Brattleboro Primary Care (Member of PCHP). “Patients will often say they received a vaccine at the pharmacy or in the ED but can’t remember what they received and my team hasn’t received that documentation to update our system. VITL’s interface allows us to go and collect that information in real time, rather than calling around for clarification.”

Jill Kenneson, a nurse manager at a pediatric practice that also uses VITL’s Query &

Response Service explains, "It's awesome when we are seeing a patient who had a recent Tdap in the ED but can't remember the date. Logging onto the immunization registry is sometimes cumbersome. Being able to click a retrieve button and get the info immediately and have it entered in the EHR is great. For patients who transfer into the practice from another Vermont office who didn't have records sent prior to their appointment, again it's easy to click the retrieve button and instantly immunization dates appear."

### **About VITL**

VITL is a nonprofit organization that supports the advancement of health care delivery and reform in Vermont through the aggregation and exchange of health information. Founded in 2005, VITL is the legislatively designated operator of the Vermont Health Information Exchange. VITL's vision is to be a leader in collaboratively delivering actionable data that leads to better health. Learn more about VITL's work at [www.vitl.net](http://www.vitl.net).

### **About Primary Care Health Partners**

In the 1980s, many of the medical offices of Primary Care Health Partners (PCHP) were part of Community Health Plan (commonly known as CHP). Later, California-based Kaiser Permanente purchased the CHP offices and managed them until Kaiser decided to leave the northeast in 1999. In January 2000, a group of primary care physicians formed PCHP with offices in both New York and Vermont. This created the largest privately-owned primary care medical group in the state of Vermont. Since 2000, PCHP has been expanding their services to more communities in New York and Vermont. For more information visit [www.pchpmd.com](http://www.pchpmd.com).

