

Ensuring a Healthier Future: The Vaccine Act of 2019 Policy Brief

Introduction to Health Issue

The Vaccine Act of 2019 represents a critical legislative effort to address one of the most pressing public health issues: vaccination rates. Even though vaccines have been developed and are easily available for many diseases, vaccination coverage is still low, especially in some areas. This results in sporadic epidemics of diseases such as measles and whooping cough, among others. These outbreaks not only pose a threat to personal health but are also a burden to the healthcare system and society.

Public Health Significance

Vaccination is considered one of the key strategies in the prevention of deadly diseases as it lowers morbidity and mortality rates. CDC pointed out that vaccines have saved millions of lives worldwide and billions of dollars in health care costs. Nevertheless, the continued circulation of some vaccine-preventable diseases calls for the formulation of sound policies to promote the use of vaccines and their coverage.



Implications of the Problem

When vaccination rates are low, people are prone to early death and high medical expenses. Surveillance of vaccine-preventable diseases often results in severe health complications, long-term disabilities as well as death. For instance, an outbreak of measles in 2019 in the United States led to more than 1,200 confirmed cases, mainly in the communities with low vaccination coverage, which calls for policy change to address this problem.

- **Measles Cases:** There were 1,282 measles cases in the United States in 2019, the highest number in a single year since 1992.
- **Vaccination Coverage:** The WHO notes that global immunization has been minimally improved to 85%, in contrast to the 95% required for herd immunity for the majority of diseases.

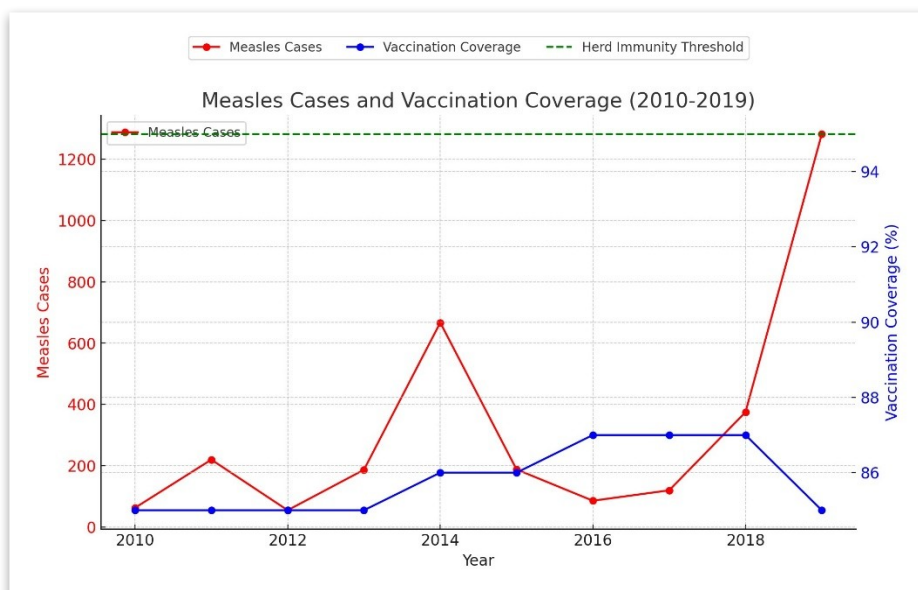


Figure 1 Measles Cases and Vaccination Coverage (2010-2019) (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2024; World Health Organization, 2024).

Current Laws and Policies

National Childhood Vaccine Injury Act (NCVIA) 1986

The goals of the NCVIA include ensuring an adequate vaccine stock, claiming cost-effective arbitration of injuries that occurred as a result of vaccinations, and the maintenance of a national program for assistance to childhood vaccine injuries. The NCVIA resulted in the development of the National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program (VICP), which is a no-fault means of handling vaccine injury petitions. It pays for the alleged victims who suffer from adverse effects of vaccines and emphasizes the importance of patients' compensation for damages that do not require proving

It compensates for administered routinely pregnant women, thus public confidence in as by addressing the (Centers for Disease on, 2024).

Vaccines for Children (VFC) Program

, also known as VFC, program launched in 1994 to provide vaccines to children who might not otherwise receive them because of the cost. The CDC oversees a program called the Vaccines for Children or VFC that enables children who qualify to get their immunizations through doctors who participate in the VFC program. Specifically, this program aims to serve children eligible for Medicaid, without health insurance, have limited health insurance, or belong to Native American/Alaska Native ethnic groups. In this way, VFC helps remove financial obstacles to immunization for low-income children, thus aiding in future disease outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2024).

Accomplishments and Limitations

Successes

The VFC program has been especially beneficial in increasing the proportion of low-income children receiving vaccination. Through the administration of free vaccines, the program has tremendously brought down the occurrence of vaccine-preventable diseases in the population. Vaccinations have been on the rise, hence reducing diseases like measles, mumps, and rubella for the children that would otherwise be left out. This success points to the need to eliminate cost-related obstacles to vaccination and increase vaccine coverage for all children, irrespective of origin (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2024).

Limitations

There are still some barriers and obstacles despite the achievements mentioned about the NCVIA and the VFC programs. Nevertheless, vaccination coverage in some areas, especially where vaccine acceptance

is low or access to healthcare is restricted, remains suboptimal. This has exposed some people to diseases on certain occasions, such as the recent measles outbreak that pointed towards vaccine issues. These lower vaccination rates can be attributed to beliefs such as myths about the dangers of vaccinations, cultural values and practices, and physical barriers to accessing health facilities. These limitations highlight that it is necessary to continue to carry out public health campaigns to present vaccination as a useful activity and eliminate the possibilities that can hinder vaccination (World Health Organization, 2024; Williams et al., 2024).

Opposition and Refute

Opposition Claims

Critics state that forced immunization violates civil liberties and can negatively affect some people.

Refutation

Though personal liberties are valuable, public health measures cannot afford to compromise the interest of society. The relative risks from the various components

of vaccines are slight compared to the overall value of protection against disease and the savings incurred from reduced healthcare expenses. In their article in the *American Journal of Public Health*, Williams et al. explained that there is a very low probability of severe adverse reactions to vaccines, further establishing their effectiveness.

We therefore encourage lawmakers to pass the Vaccine Act of 2019, which requires all school-going children to receive vaccines with permission for medical reasons to protect them from vaccine-preventable diseases. This policy is instrumental in viably attaining herd immunity to safeguard the population's health.

Call to Action

Support the Vaccine Act 2019 to improve our chances of promoting healthier, safer communities.

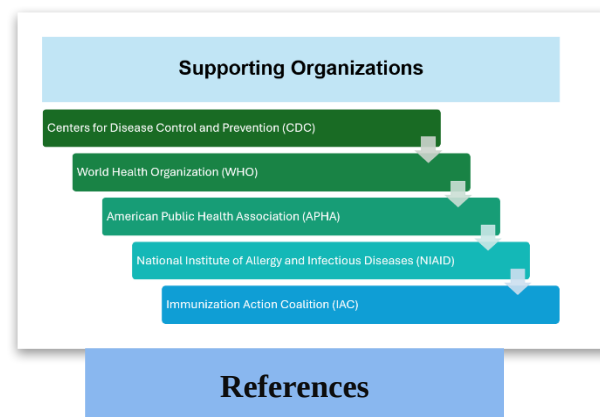
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