

What is IRIS?

The Immunization Registry Information System (IRIS) is Iowa's answer to an immunization registry. In general, immunization registries are confidential, computerized state or community based information systems. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and other entities fund registries in all 50 states. The states are all at various stages of implementation and development.

The Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) has developed IRIS to enable public and private providers to consolidate and maintain a computerized immunization record for each person that receives vaccinations in Iowa. IRIS is a user-friendly application that all staff members can use.

Enrollment is open to all healthcare providers in Iowa that administer immunizations or who have a need to medically assess the immunization status of patients. Enrollees are responsible for purchasing computer hardware, maintaining the hardware and security, and obtaining an Internet connection.

What can the IRIS program do?

- Store private and confidential immunization records of Iowans of all ages.
- Print the "official" IDPH certificate of immunization that is required for all providers.
- Produce recall/reminder letters/postcards.
- Keep patients from getting unnecessary doses of vaccine.
- Manage the vaccine inventory.
- Find immunization records of patients that are stored in the program.
- Keep track of contraindications, health history, precautions and parent refusals.
- Produce a variety of other reports that are available on the application.

Plans for the IRIS application are to enroll 100 private providers per year and have a mixture of clinics that are large and small, urban and rural, covering all areas of the state. As of October 2003, IRIS enrollees consisted of 114 public clinics in 99 counties along with over 208 private providers. Currently, there are 750,000 patient records and 5,000,000 vaccination records in IRIS.

Information that becomes part of the registry database is stored in a private and confidential manner on a server located at the IDPH in Des Moines, Iowa. Information technology staff from the department maintains the program and hardware. Access to the records is limited to healthcare providers enrolled in the program and immunization registry staff. A strictly enforced set of rules, set forth by the CDC, guides how the information can be used. A user ID and password combination must be entered every time the program is accessed. A complex

audit trail of user activity is regularly maintained. Unauthorized viewing of information transmitted via the Internet is prevented by use of the highest level of encryption available in the United States. Users are assigned access levels that vary from “view only” to “user” to “administrative” level.

Demographic data and related vaccination data is entered into IRIS. The IDPH recommends that immunization data be entered within seven days of the vaccination. The average amount of time to enter a complete record including demographic data is only seven minutes. When a complete record is already in the program, it takes approximately four minutes to enter the vaccination data.

Enrollment in the registry is voluntary. All program materials are free. The marketing coordinator arranges enrollment. Once the marketing coordinator receives notification from a clinic that they would like to enroll, the following materials are sent: a welcome letter, an IRIS information sheet, an enrollment flowsheet and a provider brochure. When the IRIS information sheet is returned to the marketing coordinator, the clinic is added to the list of prospective enrollees.

Before enrollment, the marketing coordinator contacts the clinic to establish an enrollment date. Subsequently, a pre-enrollment letter is sent to the clinic that contains the IRIS application/agreement, password policy and planning materials. After the IRIS application/agreement is returned to the marketing coordinator, the marketing coordinator discusses the work processes and other planning with the office contact person. The planning topics include: designating user levels, choosing computers to be used for the program, creating new users, preference lists and entering data. About two weeks before the enrollment date, the installation packet is sent to the clinic. This packet includes the installation disc, installation procedures, training manual, search procedures, private provider folder and brochures and the registration key. The temporary user ID and password are e-mailed to the clinic. When the clinic receives the materials, the clinic completes the installation. On the enrollment date, the clinic can go “live.” If the clinic feels the staff need on-site training, a request is made to the marketing coordinator. To assist with any questions, concerns or problems, the program provides support staff available 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 pm Monday through Friday. The support staff can be accessed by calling toll-free 1-800-374-3958 or by sending an e-mail.

There is no requirement for a specific number of entries to be made in a certain time period or for entering all patients by a certain date. The requirement is made that providers enter data accurately and on a consistent basis.