



**NEW YORK STATE
PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION**

Envisioning Healthy People in Healthy Places

**The Honorable Kathy Hochul
Governor of New York State
NYS State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224**

September 18, 2021

**SUBJECT: A.6476A/S.4807A: Authorization for Pharmacists to Provide
Vaccinations**

FROM: The New York State Public Health Association

RECOMMENDATION: Approval

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION:

Pharmacists have been successfully providing selected vaccinations to adults in New York State since 2008, including vaccinations to prevent pneumococcal pneumonia, shingles, bacterial meningitis, tetanus, diphtheria, pertussis and, recently, COVID-19. Clearly, the public appreciates the easy access to these vaccinations that they receive from pharmacists; over 2 million vaccinations are provided to adults each year by pharmacists in New York according to the State Health Department. No problems or issues have arisen with the current program since its inception.

However, the current legal framework for pharmacists to provide vaccinations has significant limitations. First, pharmacists are not currently authorized to administer a number of critically important vaccines recommended for routine use in adults by the Advisory Committee for Immunization Practices (ACIP) at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). These include vaccines to prevent human papilloma virus (HPV), hepatitis A and B, chicken pox, measles, mumps and rubella (German measles) infections. Measles vaccine administered by pharmacists would have been very helpful to increase access in recent community epidemics of measles.

Secondly, New York is one of only two states that does not allow pharmacists to administer HPV vaccine. HPV vaccine is safe and effective in preventing six types of cancer including cervical, head and neck, and other cancers. Finally, the current legislative authorization for pharmacists to vaccinate sunsets every two years, requiring reauthorization by the legislature. This interjects uncertainty into the process and is not an ideal way to protect and support what has become a major part of our vaccine delivery system for adults.

These limitations have been recognized by the current administration; provisions similar to the bills now being presented for the Governor's signature have been included in the Executive Budget proposal for the past two years.

Limiting access to vaccines serves as an unnecessary barrier and obstacle to public health efforts to raise vaccine rates for those recommended to receive these vaccines, especially in medically underserved areas and communities of color in our State. Some people don't have access to a primary care physician, they may not have transportation to get to a doctor, or they may not be able to get time off during working hours. However, most people do have access to their community pharmacy. More than 90% of nation's population lives within 2 miles of a community pharmacy.

Pharmacists receive in-depth education about vaccines as part of their training. Those who vaccinate in New York must also be certified as immunizers by the State Education Department. To provide immunizations, pharmacists must have a standing order, patient-specific or non-patient-specific, from a licensed physician or nurse practitioner. Pharmacists are not required to make diagnoses in determining who is recommended to receive vaccinations and can be safely vaccinated. The recommendations for vaccination by the ACIP and CDC clearly spell out the precautions and contraindications for each vaccine, as do the non-patient-specific physician order that pharmacists operate under. These can be determined from the patient's medical history, which pharmacists also use to dispense other pharmaceutical products or prescriptions.

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown us that pharmacists are a trusted and critical part of our health care system. The trust and accessibility of pharmacists and pharmacies has made them an essential vaccine provider, giving vaccines in the evenings, weekends and on a walk-in basis in New York's neighborhoods and communities.

CONCLUSION:

NHSPHA strongly recommends the immediate approval by the Governor of A.6476A/S.4807A authorizing pharmacist to provide immunizations.

WHO WE ARE:

The New York State Public Health Association is the New York State affiliate of the American Public Health Association and serves as the statewide organization for members from all disciplines across the spectrum of public health professionals and organizations. Our mission is to improve the public's health through advocacy, education, networking, and professional development.

For more information, please contact advocacy@nyspha.org.