

Quality of Care – *Pediatric Immunizations*

Nationally, the rates of thorough pediatric vaccinations have been improving steadily. In 1998, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, only 72.7 percent of all children nationwide received all recommended vaccinations by the age of 35 months. By 2005, that number had increased to 80.8 percent – a remarkable improvement. However, this still means that approximately one in five children nationwide is not fully immunized.

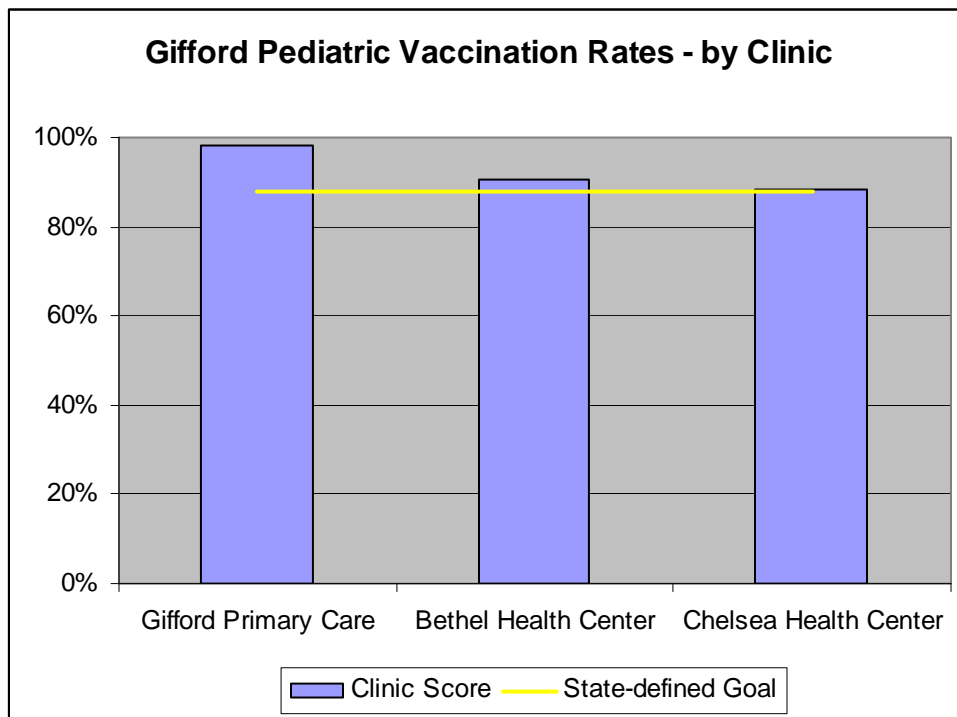
According to the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, Vermont ranked 12th in the nation in 2006 for its immunizations rates. In prior years, Vermont had been ranked much lower, partly due to the fact that the Varicella (chickenpox) vaccine is not required by law before children can attend school in Vermont. Consequently, only about 75 percent of Vermont children age 19-25 months had received that vaccine by the end of the second quarter of 2007, according to the National Immunization Survey.

At the beginning of 2007, Gifford began a concerted effort to help providers look for children who might be behind on immunizations. This started in Gifford's computer systems, where children of appropriate ages were identified. Electronic records were also searched for vaccinations provided to children.

This data was then given to providers to compare against their records. In those cases where a vaccine was not found in the computer or the patient's chart, efforts were made to contact the patient and bring vaccines up to date. Through this project, the vaccination rates of Gifford patients slowly increased.

However, in 2007, the Vermont Department of Health began implementing a statewide vaccination registry. This registry allows providers to look for vaccines administered at other care facilities, and provides a more complete picture of a patient's vaccination history than one facility might otherwise have.

As part of the transition to the use of this registry, the vaccination histories of many Gifford pediatric patients were loaded into the registry. The graph below shows the status of Gifford pediatric patients at age 24 months as of the fall of 2007 for some of the medical center's primary care practices:



Gifford has now taken on the responsibility for the use of this registry to ensure that the medical center is keeping its records and patients up to date with their immunizations. Gifford has also shared information between clinics, having those clinics with higher scores provide other clinics with tips on how to avoid missing vaccinations that are due or overdue at the time of any visit, not just a well-child visit.