

California's Immunization Registry – Frequently Asked Questions

What is an immunization registry?

An immunization registry is a secure, confidential, web-based database that stores the immunization records of children and adults. A registry helps medical practices keep patients of all ages up-to-date on vaccinations by avoiding under-immunization or over-immunization and assists health care providers and health departments by collecting data on the immunization status of the community. All 50 states have immunization registries.

How does the registry work?

Medical practices and other authorized users can access the registry by signing a confidentiality agreement and having their users trained. Staff are trained either in person or through live on line trainings and then assigned passwords to access the registry. These authorized users can then look up immunization data on their patients and update information as shots are administered.

The California Immunization Registry system is known as **CAIR**, and is comprised of a centralized registry called **CAIR2** that is managed by the California Department of Public Health, as well as 3 independent regional registries – the 8-county San Joaquin regional registry, San Diego county registry, and the Imperial county registry. Providers join the particular regional registry where their practice is located.

How is CAIR funded?

Currently, funding for CAIR is provided through the federal immunization grant awarded to the California Department of Public Health. Most of the allocated resources are used to maintain and support registry operations, including provider support activities. CAIR users pay nothing for software, training, and Help Desk support.

Who is using the registry in California?

Authorized pediatric and family practice physicians and public health departments comprise the majority of participants in CAIR. Hospitals, public and private schools, and programs such as WIC, childcare, foster care, and CalWORKS also participate in CAIR and can view immunization histories of the children they serve. In addition, correctional facilities, retail pharmacies, specialty clinics, and long-term care facilities are also authorized by statute (H&S Code 120440) to participate. Currently there are about 6,500 clinical sites accessing and submitting patient data to CAIR and about 8,000 read-only sites (e.g. schools) that have access to patient immunization records.

What does registry use look like nationally?

Every state in the US currently has an immunization registry. *Healthy People 2020* has set a national goal of having at least 95% of children under age six with two or more doses in an immunization registry by 2020. Currently, about 77% of CA children under six have two or more doses in CAIR.

What is the cost for providers?

There is no cost for healthcare providers to access the CAIR database or to use CAIR software. However, staff costs may be incurred, for example, when entering historical data into an Electronic Health Record (EHR) or into CAIR.

How does the registry (CAIR) benefit providers?

The registry reduces the staff time needed to:

- search for or replace patient immunization records
- provide records (“yellow cards” and “blue cards,”) for school, camp, or other activities
- forecast which vaccines are due
- give “just-in-case” immunizations when earlier shot records are missing
- request shot records from other providers
- prepare reminder notices
- track vaccine inventory—including separate tracking for VFC vaccine supplies

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- saves staff time by assisting with vaccine inventory
- consolidates records when patients have been immunized by different providers
- make rapid, accurate assessments of the complex vaccine schedule
- accurately tracks the practice's coverage rates

How many children's records are in CAIR?

As of September 2016 there were more than 11 million clients between the ages of 0 -18 years in CAIR, which is 100% of all Californians 0-18 years.

How are patient records kept secure?

CAIR complies with HIPAA and state law to protect patient privacy. Access is password protected and all users must abide by the CAIR Confidentiality Agreements in order to access patient records. Each viewing of patient records is tracked to maintain an audit trail. Moreover, the registry software has security features to protect confidential data from being seen by unauthorized sources.

Is special equipment needed?

Computers with high-speed Internet access are adequate for registry use. The CAIR Help Desk can help evaluate a provider's technology and identify any gaps.

How is staff trained to use CAIR?

CAIR software is very user friendly and requires only basic computer skills. Clinical users are required to attend training prior to being given access to CAIR. CAIR training is available either via online webinars or in-person training. The Help Desk is available to answer questions during normal business hours. There are additional CAIR staff to support users locally.

How does CAIR integrate with existing EMR/EHRs?

A provider can set up a data exchange between their EHR and CAIR by working with the CAIR team. Integration with CAIR is simple for those providers with existing EMR/EHRs as CAIR accepts standard HL7 immunization messages which most EMR/EHRs are able to send. Data exchange file specifications are available from CAIRDataExchange@cdph.ca.gov.

There are currently about 5,000 sites with EHR systems submitting immunization data to CAIR electronically and an additional 1,800 sites that are engaged in message 'testing'. CAIR receives >1M HL7 messages per month.

Some families might not like the idea of a registry. What are their options?

Parents or guardians have the right to prevent their children's records from being shared with other authorized CAIR users, and to inspect their children's registry records for accuracy. Although parents and individuals have the right to opt out, the vast majority of families choose to participate.

Can I access patient records from another part of California?

The CAIR Help Desk can assist providers to obtain patient records outside of their region. Over the next years the regions will be electronically linked. This will enable a participating provider anywhere in California to access patient immunization data from any of the state's regions.

Where can I learn more about CAIR?

Visit CAIRweb.org or contact the CAIR Help Desk at **800-578-7889**.