

Connecting Care and Prevention: The Nurse's Role in Immunization

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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Disclosures

I have no relevant financial relationships with ineligible companies to disclose.

Learning objectives

Upon completion of this course, participants should be able to:

- Describe how nurses apply evidence-based, population-focused assessment to identify community immunization needs and gaps.
- Explain how nurses design and implement culturally responsive immunization strategies that advance equity and reduce vaccine-preventable disease.
- Demonstrate how nurses strengthen vaccine confidence through effective communication, health education, and trust-building.
- Identify how nurses engage in collaborative and advocacy-driven practices that support coordinated community immunization efforts.

Early 1900s: Nurses on the front line of disease prevention



Early nursing efforts helped to:

- Expand community education and shift health toward prevention.
- Support the underserved.
- Identify and control common deadly outbreaks.
- Lead vaccination efforts.
- Shape modern immunization programs.
- Build public trust.

Source: American Nurses Association. Public Health Nursing: Scope and Standards of Practice- 3rd Edition (2022).
Photo credit: "Abby Knocking on the Door" MDH Public Health Nursing Practice for the 21st Century Learning Guide.

Nurses: A trusted voice for health

- Nurses consistently rank as the most trusted profession in the U.S.
  - Gallup polls have ranked nurses #1 for honesty and ethics for more than 20 years.
- Perceived as patient-centered and compassionate.
- Viewed as strong advocates for patient interests
  - Patients report confidence in nurses as health educators and care navigators.
- Trusted frontline presence during public health emergencies.
- High ethical and professional standards.



Sources: Gallup Poll (2026); Sedighi, S. et al., BMC Nursing (2025); Henriksen, S. et al., Journal of Advanced Nursing (2025).

Nursing ethics and immunizations

American Nurses Association (ANA) Position Statement on Immunizations (based on *ANA's Code of Ethics for Nurses)*:

- **Advocacy**: "Nurses must advocate for, educate, and advise patients to adhere to vaccination schedules recommended by solid research and the patient's healthcare provider, explaining their need and public health implications."
- **Fidelity**: "Patients' fears and questions regarding immunizations should be acknowledged and then answered with evidence-based information."
- **Nonmaleficence**: "Nurses must emphasize that recommended immunizations are safe and necessary."
- **Beneficence**: "Nurses have a responsibility to promote health and safety, prevent illness and injury, and protect and preserve the health of the public."
- **Justice, Equity and Autonomy**: "The nurse's primary commitment is to the recipient(s) of nursing care, whether an individual or population."
- **Veracity**: "Nurses have a responsibility to combat the dissemination of health misinformation and disinformation."
- **Professional Responsibility and Accountability**: "It is highly recommended that nurses are fully vaccinated to model public health maintenance standards, foster patient trust in the medical community, and affirm the proven clinical safety and effectiveness of vaccinations."

Nursing licensure and scope of practice



Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN)/Licensed Vocational Nurse (LVN)

Registered Nurse (RN)

- Associate Degree Nurse (ADN)
- Bachelor of Science (BSN)

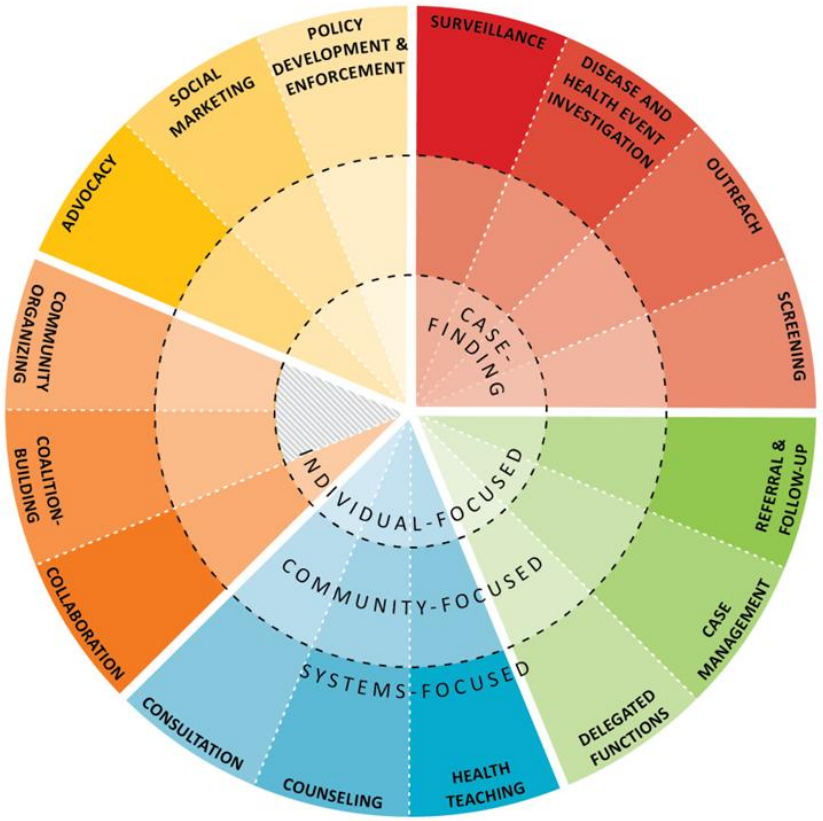
Advanced Practice Registered Nurse (APRN)

- Master of Science (MSN)
- Certified Nurse Midwife (CNM)
- Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS)
- Nurse Practitioner (NP), Pediatric Nurse Practitioner (PNP), Family Nurse Practitioner (FNP)
- Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP)
- Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist (CRNA)

PhD in Nursing

Source: National Council of State Boards of Nursing, 2026.

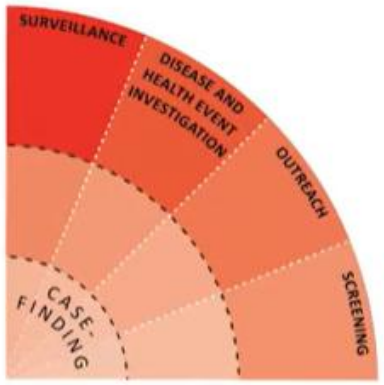
What is the role of the nurse in immunization?



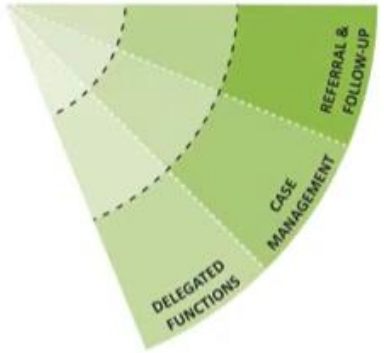
- Immunization impacts our entire population.
- The nurse's role in immunization is multi-focused and multi-layered:
  - Individual/family-focused.
  - Community-focused.
  - Systems-focused.
- 17 nursing interventions related to immunization work.
  - Five color-coordinated wedges of related actions.

Source: Minnesota Department of Health. (2019). Public health interventions: Applications for public health nursing practice (2nd ed.).

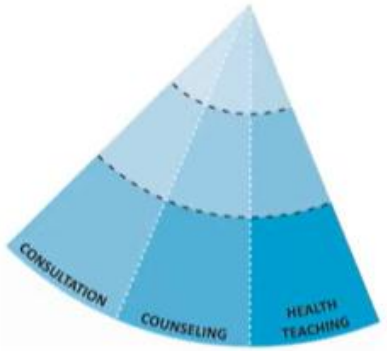
Nursing interventions



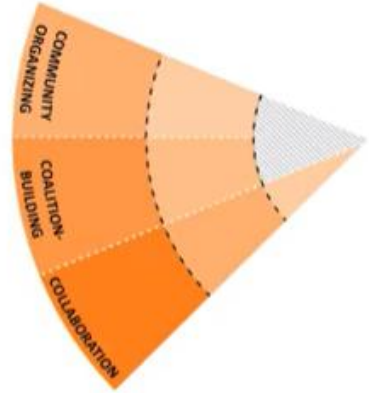
- Surveillance
- Disease and health event investigation
- Outreach
- Screening
- Case-finding



- Referral and follow-up
- Case management
- Delegated functions



- Health teaching
- Counseling
- Consultation

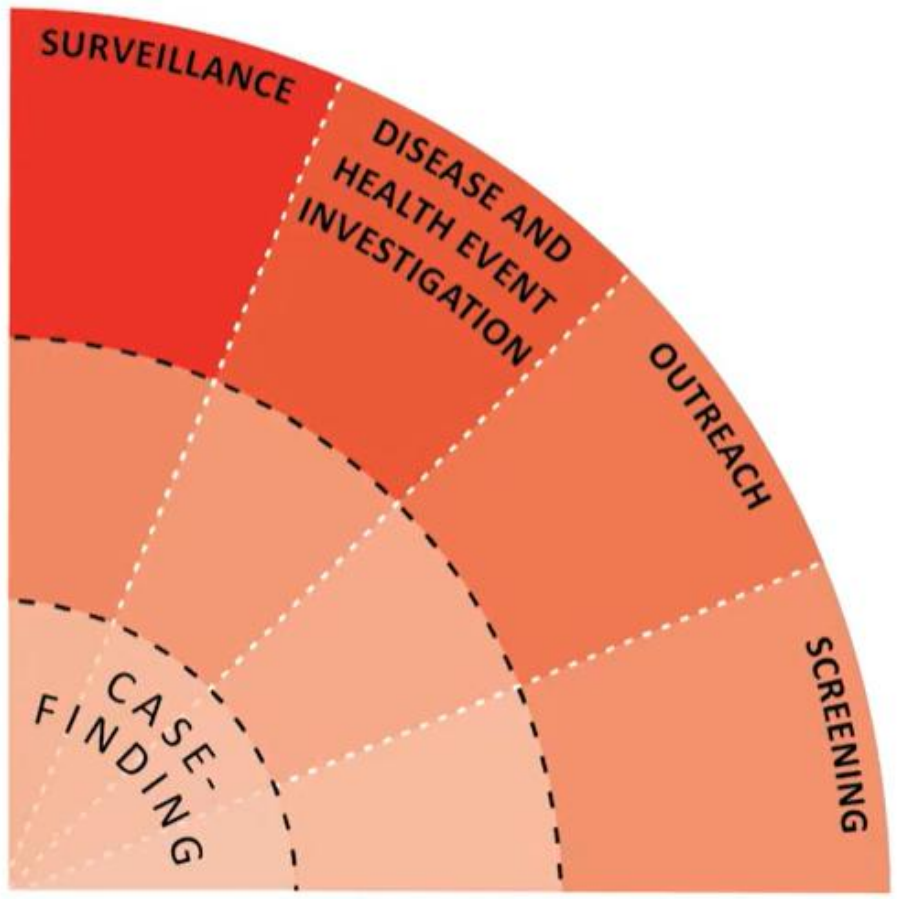


- Collaboration
- Coalition-building
- Community organizing



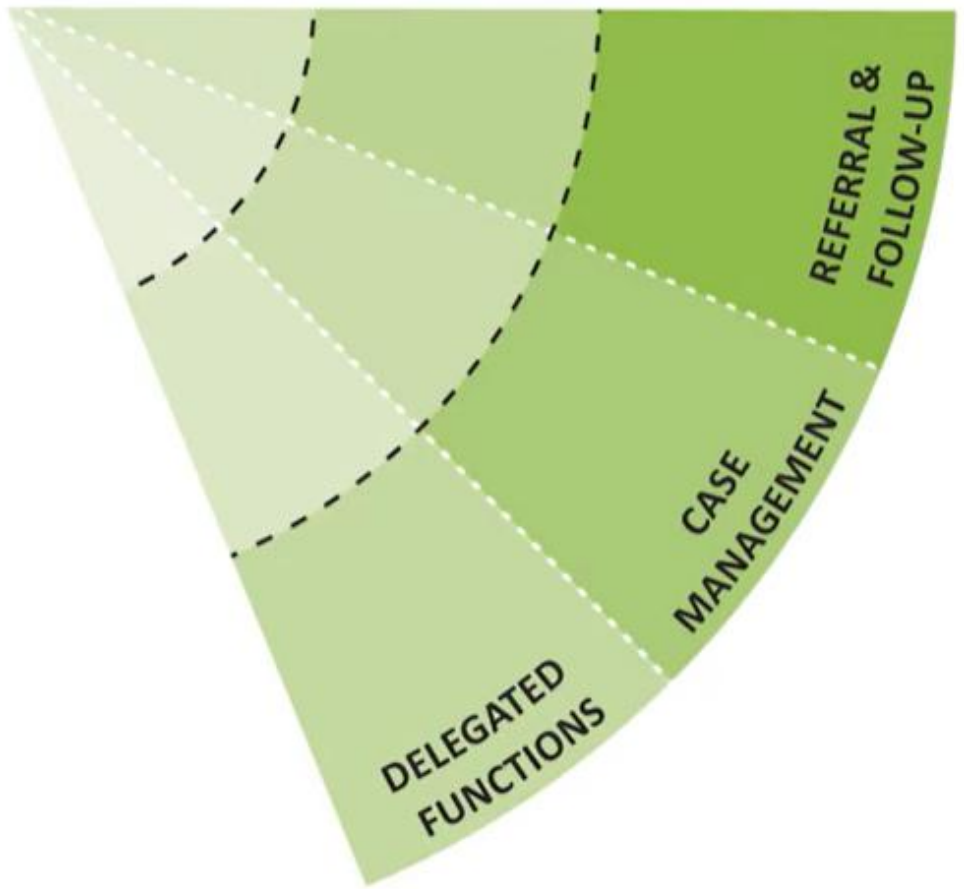
- Advocacy
- Social marketing
- Policy development and enforcement

Red wedge



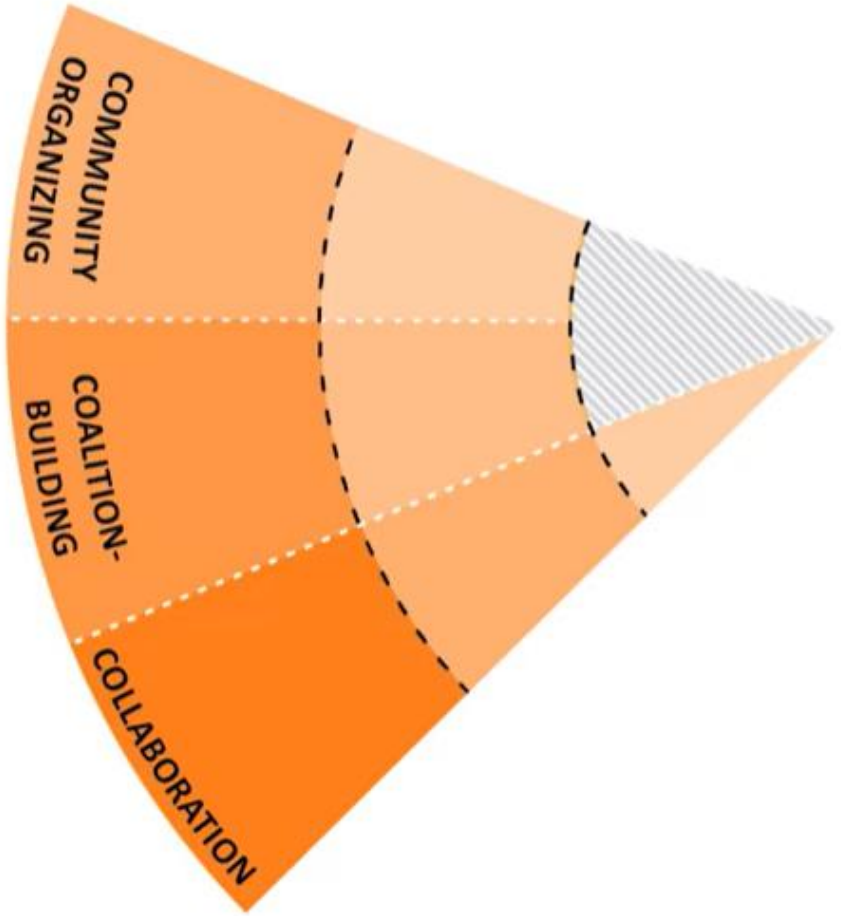
- **Surveillance**: Monitor immunization rates and vaccine-preventable disease trends through clinic data, school reports and immunization registries to identify under-immunized populations.
- **Disease and health event investigation**: Follow-up on reports of vaccine-preventable diseases to determine sources and populations at risk.
- **Outreach**: Proactively deliver information and connect with hard-to-reach populations.
- **Screening**: Review immunization records to identify missing or overdue vaccines.
- **Case-finding**: Search for individuals at high risk of being under-immunized and connect them with services.

Green wedge



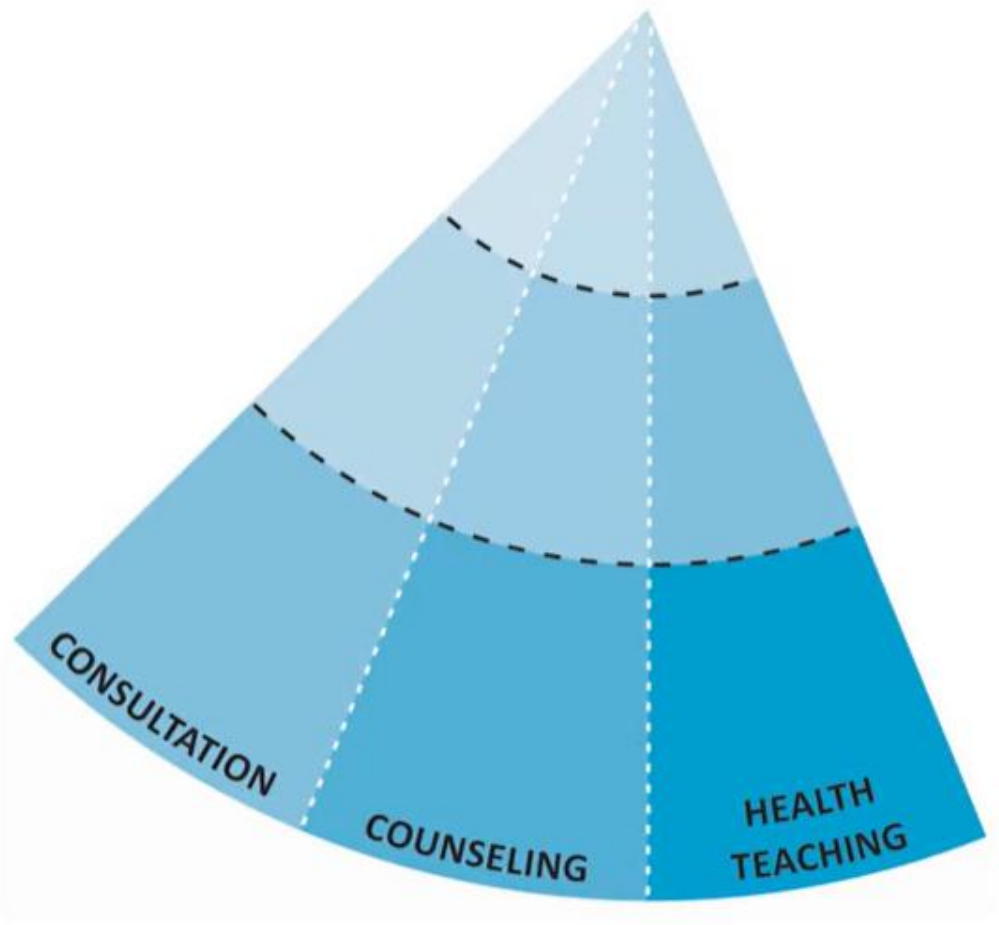
- **Referral and follow-up**: The nurse refers clients to appropriate vaccination sites and checks whether vaccinations were completed.
- **Case management**: The nurse coordinates services for individuals with complex needs affecting vaccination.
- **Delegated functions**: The nurse administers vaccines under standing orders or delegates allowed tasks to trained assistive personnel.

Orange wedge



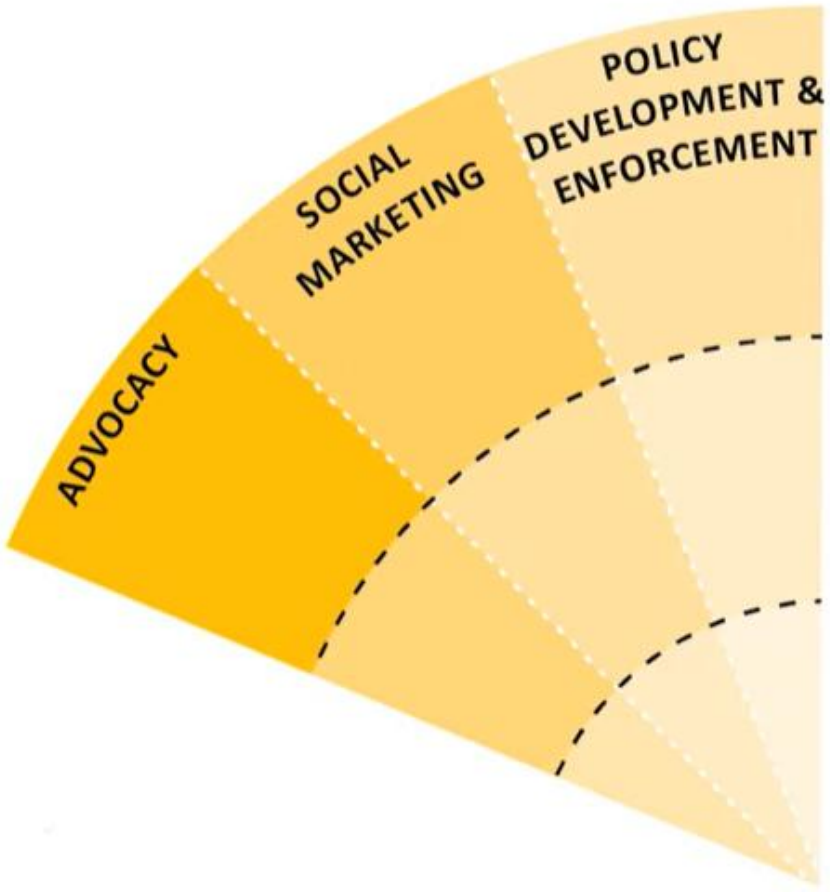
- **Community organizing**: The nurse mobilizes community members to identify needs and take action related to vaccine-preventable disease risk.
- **Coalition building**: The nurse helps form coalitions focused on improving immunization coverage.
- **Collaboration**: The nurse works jointly with other agencies or partners to increase vaccination rates.

Blue wedge



- **Health teaching**: The nurse provides education to increase knowledge about vaccine benefits and safety.
- **Counseling**: The nurse addresses emotional and personal barriers to vaccination through supportive conversation.
- **Consultation**: The nurse offers expert advice to organizations, clinics, schools, or community groups.

Yellow wedge



- **Advocacy**: The nurse speaks on behalf of individuals or populations to improve conditions affecting immunization.
- **Social marketing**: The nurse uses targeted messaging to encourage vaccination behaviors.
- **Policy development and enforcement**: The nurse helps create or enforce policies that support vaccination.

Knowledge check 1

Which nursing action is most appropriate for analyzing immunization data to identify gaps in vaccination coverage across a community?

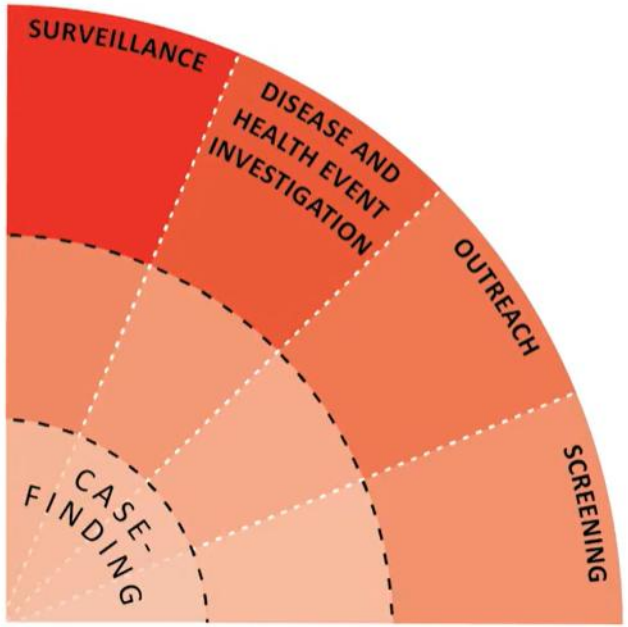
A. Health teaching

B. Surveillance

C. Delegated functions

D. Case management

Correct answer: B. Surveillance
Community-focused surveillance involves collecting and analyzing population-level data to detect disease trends and immunization gaps.

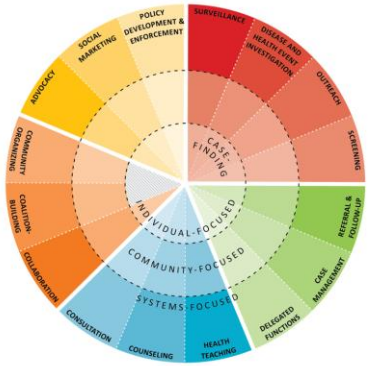


Clinic nurse

"Vaccines don't save lives; vaccinations save lives." Dr. Stanley Plotkin

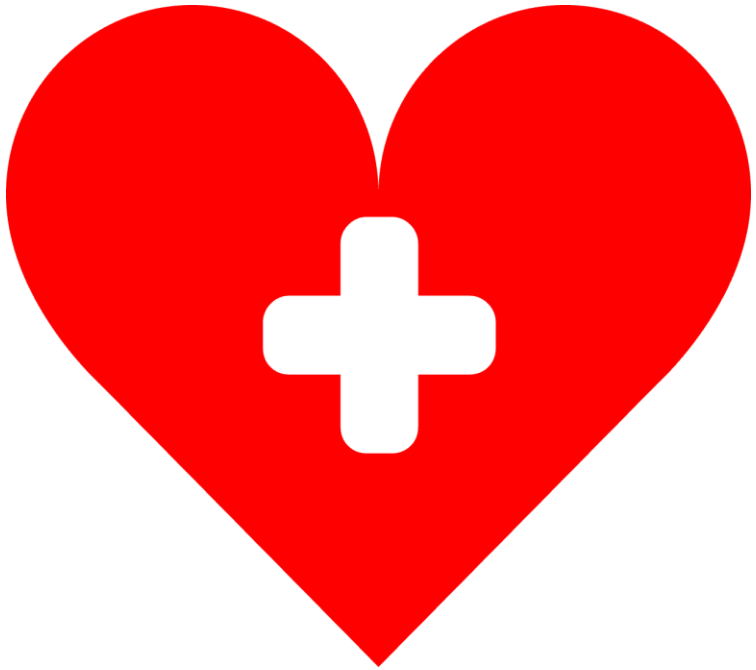
- Individual/family-focused interventions
  - Screening
  - Case-finding
  - Health teaching
  - Advocacy
  - Referral and follow-up





Improving the vaccination experience

- Addressing vaccination anxiety.
  - Infants and toddlers
  - Children
  - Adolescents
  - Adults
- Non-pharmacological pain management options.
- Vaccination-related syncope.
- Working with people with sensory needs.
- Pain management after vaccines.



Source: Immunize.org: Improving the Vaccination Experience and Accessible Vaccination for Neurodiverse People at Any Age

Comfort positioning during vaccination



Cuddle hold for infants.



Side comfort hold for toddlers.



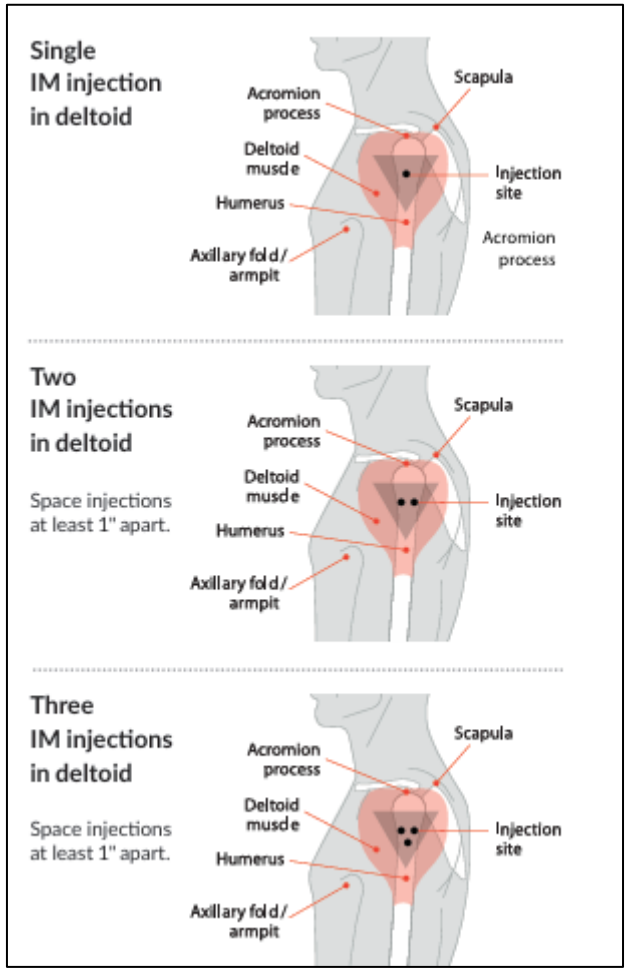
Back to chest comfort hold.

Source: Minnesota Department of Health (2025).

Prevention of vaccine injury

Shoulder Injury Related to Vaccine Injury (SIRVA):

- Occurs when the injection is given into the shoulder capsule instead of the deltoid muscle.
- Caused by improper injection technique or landmarking for intramuscular deltoid injections.
- Symptoms (typically occur either immediately or less than 4 days following vaccination):
  - prolonged and debilitating shoulder pain
  - decreased range of motion
  - weakness
  - signs of inflammation
  - tingling in the affected arm
- Individuals may need physical therapy or additional treatment.
- Incidence is uncommon: 1 to 2 per million.



Sources: Wood, C. and Ilyas, A. Shoulder Injury Related to Vaccine Administration: Diagnosis and Management (2022); Immunize.org: How to Administer Multiple Intramuscular Vaccines to Adults During One Visit.

Nurse practitioner

Americans' confidence in their personal healthcare providers remains strong.

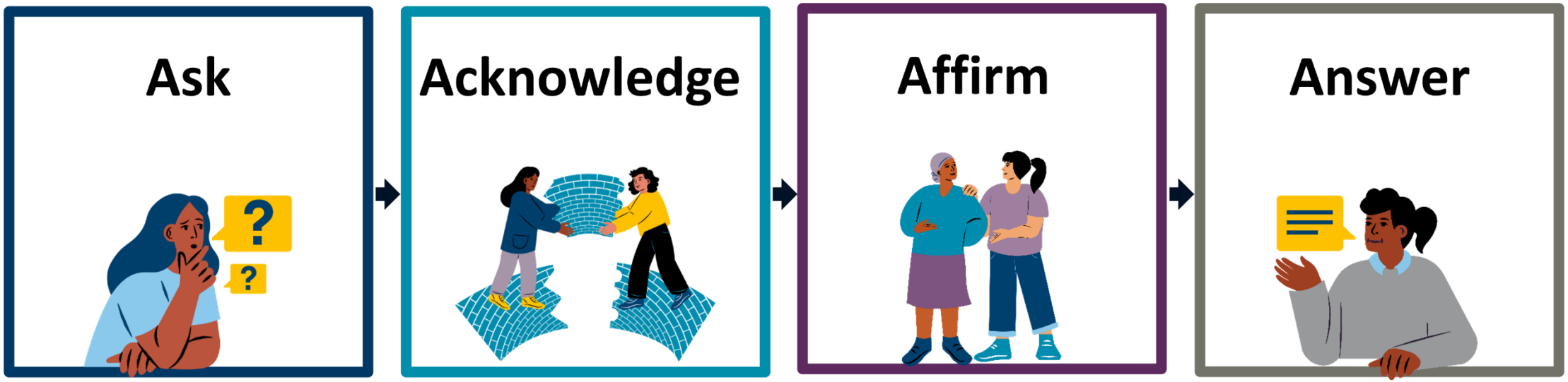
- Patients place deep trust in providers who build long-term, meaningful relationships by:
  - Listening to understand each patient's life context.
  - Welcoming doubts with openness.
  - Addressing questions patiently and without judgment.
- Nurse practitioners:
  - Understand vaccinology and immunology.
  - Apply evidence-based immunization recommendations.
  - Assess patient risk factors and accurately match them to vaccine needs.
  - Use confident presumptive recommendations paired with curious, empathetic communication.



Sources: Annenberg Public Policy Center (2026); Edelman and Yale School of Public Health (2026).

Vaccine conversations: The four As

Source: Voices for Vaccines' Becoming Trusted Messengers



Knowledge check 2

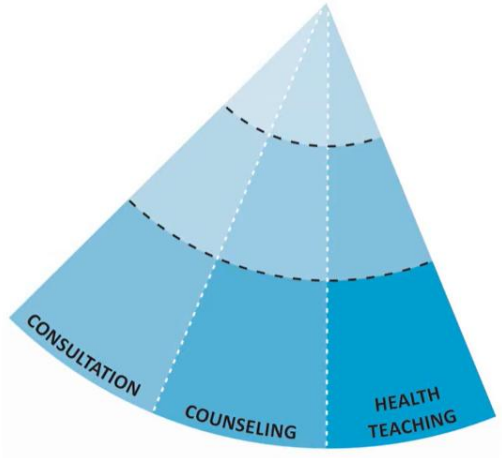
A nurse practitioner provides a strong immunization recommendation while actively listening to patient concerns and supporting patient autonomy. Which nursing actions are being used?

A. Delegated functions and screening

B. Counseling and health teaching

C. Case-finding and outreach

D. Policy development and enforcement



Correct answer: B. Health teaching and counseling support effective communication and trust-building that enhances vaccine confidence.

Local public health nurse



Public health nursing is the practice of promoting and protecting the health of populations employing all levels of prevention and improving health outcomes by addressing social, physical, environmental and other determinants of health.

- Builds trust within the community.
- Knows community leaders and trusted voices.
- Expertise in ***community-focused*** assessment, policy development and assurance.
  - Surveillance
  - Disease and health event investigation
  - Collaboration
  - Community organizing

Source: American Nurse's Association's Public Health Nursing: Scope and Standards of Practice- 3rd Edition.

Knowledge check 3

When designing culturally responsive immunization strategies, which nursing action best reflects community-level practice?

A. Providing one-on-one immunization counseling during home visits.

B. Scheduling vaccine clinics during limited daytime hours.

C. Partnering with cultural leaders to co-design strategies that address barriers to immunization.

D. Requiring all nursing staff to complete mandatory immunization modules.

Correct Answer: C. Community organizing and collaboration emphasize engaging cultural and community partners to co-create effective immunization interventions.

Nurse administrator



Nurse administrators have a broad impact on the health of patients at the ***systems-focused level***.

- Policy development and enforcement.
  - Prioritizes vaccine access.
- Social marketing on a clinic-wide level.
- Collaboration with external partners.
- Outreach with system-wide reminders.
- Surveillance of data across the clinic system.

Vaccine management

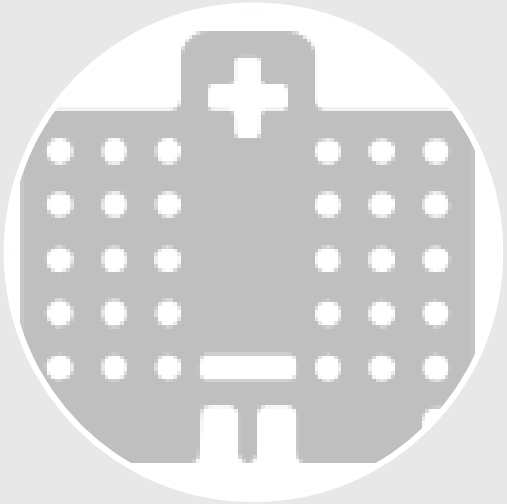
Ensures system-wide processes consistently prioritize immunization.

- Budgeting and ordering vaccines.
- Procedures for storage and handling of vaccines.
- Documentation of vaccinations.
- Evidence-based practice.
- Vaccine Information Statement (VIS) compliance.
- Vaccine Adverse Events Reporting System (VAERS) and medication error procedures.
- Required trainings, reports and site visits.



Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2026.

Hospital nurse



Inpatient floors

Identify patients who are eligible for vaccines during their hospital stay.

Offer vaccines before discharge.

Talk to the patient and family about how to stay healthy and prevent another hospital stay.



Labor and delivery/newborn nursery

Strongly recommend hepatitis B vaccination at birth and respiratory syncytial virus immunization (RSV mAbs) for infants born October-March whose mother did not receive RSV vaccine during pregnancy.



Emergency department

Screen all patients for vaccine eligibility.

Vaccinate before discharge when appropriate.

Link to primary care for follow-up.

Source: American Academy of Pediatrics, 2026..

Employee health nurse



Employee health nurses protect healthcare workers and staff from vaccine-preventable diseases.

- Policy development and enforcement:
  - Reviews federal, state, organizational immunization policies.
  - Ensures compliance with required and recommended vaccines.
- Collaboration:
  - Partners with infection control, nursing leadership and administration to align goals.
- Community organizing:
  - Convenes a multi-department workgroup to identify barriers and develop solutions.
  - Plans and delivers onsite vaccination clinics for ease of access.
- Social marketing.

School nurse

National Association of School Nurses (NASN) Position Statement on Immunization and Vaccination Requirements:

"Timely, up-to-date and complete required vaccination for members of the school population are essential for protecting school-age children, youth and the public from preventable, serious infectious diseases."

"Vaccine exemptions should be eliminated, except when necessary for validated medical contraindications."

School nurse immunization actions:

- Surveillance and case finding.
- Collaboration:
  - School-Based Health Clinics.
  - School-Located Immunization Programs.
- Health education:
  - Students, parents and staff.



Nursing school faculty



Preparing a vaccine confident nursing workforce.

- Health teaching:
  - Integrating immunization content into nursing curriculum across the lifespan.
  - Providing a population-based public health perspective on vaccination.
  - Educating students about evidence-based immunization recommendations.
  - Preparing nursing students for vaccine conversations.
- Delegated functions:
  - Vaccine administration.
- Advocacy
  - College and university flu vaccination challenge.

Sources: New Jersey Department of Health (2026); Buckner, S. et al. (2022).

The role of the nurse in immunization



Thank you!

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