

**PUBLIC HEALTH PROGRAM SURVEY- Maternal and Child  
Health**

**Contact Information**

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**Short Title:** “Picture Me Healthy” baby photo book incentive program to improve immunization rates

**Program Location:** Madera County, Madera, California

**Objectives and Goals:**

The goal of the “Picture Me Healthy” baby photo book program is to improve immunization rates of young children in a rural public health setting through a cost effective, sustainable program thus reducing the burden of vaccine preventable disease and improving the overall health status of the community. Following the U.S. Measles outbreak in 1989-1990, where this small rural county experienced over 100 documented cases, it became clear to staff that improving immunization rates needed to be a public health priority. In 1993, faced with one of the lowest immunization rates (28 percent) in the state of California for 2 year-old-children, Madera County had to develop new and creative ways to educate and motivate parents to get their children immunized.

**Methods:**

Public Health staff strategized ways to address the problem. The idea of an incentive that would be attractive to parents and that would both serve to improve the visit’s perception by parents while providing educational and motivational messaging was created. Many of the families served by this Department are of limited income and often are not able to afford routine photographs of their children. The “Picture Me Healthy” baby photo book program was created with this fact in mind. Public Health programs in the Department contributed outreach messages to be included in the book (tobacco, perinatal, lead poisoning prevention, etc...). Photos are taken with an inexpensive digital camera and printed out in the clinic on a small photo printer. Parents/caregivers receive the book at the first visit and photos are taken at each subsequent visit (from 2 mo. – 24 mo.). A space to remind them of the next IZ due, is on the bottom of each photo page, so that when the book is viewed so is the reminder reinforcing the need to return. Resource information, along with important phone numbers may be found on the back.

**Program Length:**

The program began in 1993 and continues to operate today.

**Number of target population reached by effort:**

Every infant less than two years of age seeking services at the Public Health Immunization Clinic. Approximately 500 unduplicated children per year.

**Demographic Info:**

Located in the geographic center of California, Madera County is the home of approximately 145,000 residents and is one of the fastest growing counties in the State. Agriculture is the largest industry in the county and employers depend upon a pool of migratory farm workers to assist them. As in any county reliant on agriculture as a primary industry, Madera County experiences higher unemployment rates and greater seasonal variations in unemployment. Over 21% of the population live below the poverty level. Primary ethnic composition of the County is Caucasian 43.6% and Hispanic 47.3%.

**Overall Cost:**

The cost of the book for professional printing and spiral binding is \$3.00 and photos run approximately \$.13 per photograph. The total cost per child to complete the book equates to approximately \$3.50. Annually, the program costs the Department less than \$2,000, but the cost savings can be significant. It is estimated that for every dollar spent in vaccinating against Measles Mumps and Rubella, \$14.00 are saved in health care costs. Programs that include outreach information assist with the cost of the printing as part of their outreach budgets.

**Funding Sources:**

75 % Federal  
25 % Local  
percentages ARE estimates

**Outcomes:**

Immunization rates have steadily increased from 28% to over 87% up-to-date for children two years of age. With these increased coverage rates we have experienced fewer cases of vaccine preventable diseases. In addition, we have seen some unexpected, but very positive outcomes. Parents are now more willing to come to the clinic, they frequently bring the child “dressed up” for the photo opportunity. This program reinforces the clinic experience in a positive way and helps families view the experience as something to look forward to. Finally our clinic staff morale has improved as staff look forward to decorating a seasonal backdrop (poster board and car seat draped in fabric) and enjoy taking turns as photographer.

**Did you make any estimates regarding costs deferred, outbreaks averted or deaths prevented?**

The CDC states that “An economic evaluation of the impact of seven vaccines (DTaP, TD, Hib, polio, MMR, hepatitis B, and varicella) routinely given as part of the childhood immunization schedule found that the vaccines are tremendously cost-effective. Routine childhood vaccination with these seven vaccines prevents over 14 million cases of disease and over 33,500 deaths over the lifetime of children born in any given year, resulting in annual cost savings of \$10 billion in direct medical costs and over \$40 billion in indirect societal costs.” In our County we believe that one child with a vaccine preventable disease is too many. The cost to the child, the family and the community is great, and we are grateful that we have been successful in reducing the burden in Madera County.

**Additional Information:**

The “Picture Me Health” program differs from other approaches as it provides positive reinforcement to parents through a simple low cost incentive (photo book and photos). It is unique as it was created to specifically meet the needs of the clients we serve in rural central California, but it can be easily adapted to any area or to changing program needs as it is maintained on our departmental computers. It offers growth and development information, developmental milestones and preventive health information in a simple, low literacy format. It has served to improve the perception by parents of the immunization clinic experience and the department and has fostered improved staff morale as it has provided them with the opportunity to have a positive experience with the children before the immunizations are administered. Although this project began as a local effort, developed initially through collaboration of public health department staff, the project has been shared in the community and to other immunization programs in other counties and states. We update our version periodically and we will provide copies of our English and Spanish version to interested agencies. In addition, staff are happy to share our department’s experience, suggestions for inexpensive equipment and how the photo process works in our department. The greatest cost to program sustainability is the printing and binding costs, but by sharing the costs between programs, not only is the burden of cost reduced, other resources are now able to be leveraged and programs have been able to significantly increase their outreach and educational efforts.

**Future Plans:**

We will continue to provide this program, sharing the cost across programs. If funding becomes restrictive we will request assistance from community organizations such as Rotary, as they have partnered with the Department in the past on this project and others.