
II. THE MISSION OF THE NATIONAL VACCINE PROGRAM AND PURPOSE OF THE NATIONAL VACCINE PLAN

Infectious diseases that are preventable through the use of vaccines are still a major cause of death, disease, and disability in the United States and worldwide, and their treatment entails substantial medical costs. Accordingly, Congress has declared that the mission of the National Vaccine Program is to "achieve optimal prevention of human infectious diseases through immunization and to achieve optimal prevention of adverse reactions to vaccines" (P.L. 99-660).

The National Vaccine Program is a multifaceted, cross-departmental endeavor encompassing numerous activities related to vaccine development and immunization. These activities are implemented by various Federal departments and agencies acting in concert with each other, the States, and the private sector. The departments and agencies specifically covered by the statute creating the program (or which have assumed responsibilities in it) include the U.S. Agency for International Development; the Department of Defense; and the Department of Health and Human Services, including the Health Care Financing Administration and various agencies of the Public Health Service (PHS), namely, the Agency for Health Care Policy and Research, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Food and Drug Administration, the Health Resources and Services Administration, and the National Institutes of Health (see appendix 2). Other Federal departments whose mandates address health and welfare but not specifically immunization are also involved in the effort and include the Department of Education, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, and the Department of Agriculture. The PHS's National Vaccine Program Office (NVPO) monitors, coordinates, and provides leadership for the overall collaborative effort. In addition, the NVPO attempts to ensure that no gaps occur in Federal planning.

The National Vaccine Plan provides a strategic framework -- including goals, objectives, and strategies -- for pursuing the prevention of infectious diseases. The purpose of the framework is to enable Federal agencies, States, municipalities, and private-sector entities to undertake their individual activities in a more coordinated fashion. The framework also will provide a basis for incorporating various other specific efforts, such as the President's Childhood Immunization Initiative, which is aimed at establishing an effective and sustainable vaccination delivery system for young children.

Some of the plan's goals, objectives, and strategies, as laid out in this document, are necessarily long-term ones because successful vaccine development is a lengthy process and because achieving a sustainable, effective vaccination delivery system within the present U.S. health care environment is likely to be complex and difficult.

This first plan, the 1994 plan, reflects the initial efforts of the National Vaccine Program Office and agencies collaborating in the National Vaccine Program to forge a truly integrated national effort in disease prevention through vaccine development and immunization. As subsequent plans are prepared, the NVPO expects to be able to coordinate more closely with the private sector and to show better the contributions of specific Federal agency activities to meeting the plan's goals.