

## 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 online training 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.

### 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 and adults 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 over 15,000 clinical sites submitting patient data to CAIR and about 2,500 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.

### 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:

- Consolidate patient immunization records from multiple sources
- Provide records (“yellow cards” and “blue cards,”) for school, camp, or other activities
- Make rapid, accurate assessments of what vaccines are due
- Prepare reminder notices
- Track vaccine inventory—including separate tracking for VFC vaccine supplies

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### How many records are in CAIR?

As of February 2025, there are over 12 million clients between the ages of 0 -18 years in CAIR, which is 100% of all Californians 0-18 years. CAIR also contains 220 million doses for clients 0-18 years and 610 million doses overall.

### How are patient records kept secure?

CAIR complies with HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability) 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](mailto:CAIRDataExchange@cdph.ca.gov) or visit our Data Exchange site.

There are currently about 9,600 sites with EHR systems submitting immunization data to CAIR and 3,623 sites engaged in bidirectional messaging that allows CAIR patient records to be sent back to their EHRs (Electronic Health Record) for import. CAIR receives >9.6 million total messages per week, and 89.5% of these are bidirectional requests for patient records.

### 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 lock their record in CAIR, most families choose not to lock their records.

### Where can I learn more about CAIR?

Visit [CAIRweb.org](http://CAIRweb.org) or contact the CAIR Help Desk at [CAIRHelpDesk@cdph.ca.gov](mailto:CAIRHelpDesk@cdph.ca.gov).