

# VACCINE ACCESS ACTION PLAN

IMPLEMENTATION TOOLKIT



MAY 2026

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The Vaccine Access Action Plan (VAAP) is a patient-centred initiative led by the Ontario Pharmacists Association (OPA) to identify and address barriers to timely and equitable vaccine access through community pharmacies.

The report was developed through a rigorous, evidence-informed process guided by a multi-disciplinary Vaccine Access Advisory Committee and informed by an environmental scan, literature review, and cross-jurisdictional analysis.

The Action Plan puts forward a series of practical, evidence-informed recommendations designed to address the key barriers limiting timely and equitable vaccine access in Ontario. These recommendations focus on modernizing regulatory and policy frameworks, reducing financial barriers, strengthening system capacity, improving public awareness, and enabling pharmacy professionals to better support patients across the immunization journey.

## Amplifying Our Efforts

This toolkit is designed to equip OPA leaders, members, and partners with the tools and messaging needed to effectively mobilize around the VAAP. It supports users in raising awareness of the report, reinforcing the value of community pharmacy in immunization, and advocating for practical, system-aligned improvements – including expanding pharmacists' scope of practice to include prescribing authority for all vaccines. The materials are intended to ensure consistent, evidence-based messaging across audiences and engagement settings.

Developed for OPA Board and leadership, pharmacy champions and early adopters, committee members, spokespeople, and partner organizations, the toolkit is intended to be used flexibly based on each user's role and opportunities for engagement. This may include sharing key messages in meetings and briefings, posting social content using the provided copy and graphics, leveraging the FAQ in stakeholder conversations, circulating the one-pager with decision-makers, and incorporating the messaging into local and provincial advocacy efforts.

[↓ Download The Vaccine Access Action Plan](#)

# How Can You Participate

OPA members and partners play a critical role in advancing the VAAP. Whether through everyday conversations, local engagement, or broader advocacy efforts, your voice helps build awareness, credibility, and momentum for change.

There are several ways you can support this work:



## Amplify the message.

Share key messages from the VAAP in your professional networks, community conversations, and stakeholder engagements to help raise awareness of the opportunity to improve vaccine access through community pharmacy.



## Support stakeholder outreach.

Where appropriate, share the one-pager and report with local decision-makers, partners, and community leaders to help inform ongoing policy and system discussions.



## Engage in local conversations.

Use the FAQ and supporting materials when speaking with patients, colleagues, and health system partners to reinforce the value of pharmacy-based immunization and the need to modernize the current framework.



## Be a champion for practice evolution.

Continue to highlight how pharmacy professionals are already supporting Ontarians and the practical steps that can further strengthen timely and equitable vaccine access – including enabling pharmacy professionals to practice to their full scope.



## Leverage your digital platforms.

Post and share the provided social media content to extend the reach of the VAAP and ensure consistent, evidence-based messaging across audiences.

# Key Messages

## Overarching Key Messages

- Vaccination remains one of the most effective tools to protect Ontarians from vaccine-preventable diseases, yet immunization rates are declining across Ontario.
- Improving timely and equitable access to vaccines is critical to protecting population health and reducing pressure on an already strained health care system.
- Community pharmacy professionals are among the most accessible healthcare providers and have proven their value through influenza and COVID-19 immunization efforts.
- With approximately 91% of Ontarians living within five kilometres of a community pharmacy, pharmacies are uniquely positioned to help close persistent access gaps.
- Despite this demonstrated capacity, pharmacy professionals continue to face regulatory, financial, operational, and public awareness barriers that limit their ability to fully support patients.

### For example:

- In Ontario, pharmacists still do not have the authority to prescribe vaccines, which introduces unnecessary steps and adds barriers to how patients access care, resulting in a patient having to first obtain a prescription from another provider before returning to the pharmacy for immunization in many situations. Ontario is one of only two Canadian provinces that don't allow pharmacists to prescribe vaccines.
- In Ontario, not all publicly funded vaccines are available through community pharmacies. As a result, some patients must be referred elsewhere by the pharmacist to obtain their immunizations. Enabling pharmacists to assess, recommend and administer all publicly funded vaccines at the same time creates a more streamlined, one-visit experience for patients.

## Overarching Key Messages (continued)

- The Vaccine Access Action Plan (VAAP) provides a coordinated, evidence-informed roadmap to modernize vaccine delivery and better leverage the pharmacy workforce to strengthen vaccine access.
- The plan includes a set of recommendations designed to address key challenges in the following areas:
  - Regulatory and policy
  - Financial and insurance coverage
  - Workforce and operational capacity
  - Public awareness and perception
- One recommendation, expanding pharmacists' scope of practice to include prescribing authority for all vaccines, would streamline access, reduce administrative burden, and improve the patient experience.
- Additional recommendations include eliminating the use of a list-based approach to scope of practice and enabling pharmacists to administer all available vaccines, enabling community pharmacies to provide all publicly funded vaccines, supporting initiatives that expand labour capacity in community pharmacies including increasing the scope of pharmacy technicians, establishing fair and reasonable remuneration for pharmacy vaccine services, and increasing public awareness on vaccine availability and coverage, among many other important recommendations.
- Advancing these recommendations will require continued collaboration across government, healthcare providers, and system partners.

## Key Messages For Government Partners

- Pressure on primary care and public health continues to grow in Ontario, highlighting the opportunity to better leverage pharmacists to strengthen system capacity.
- Community pharmacies offer accessible, local care that aligns with government priorities on prevention, access, and efficiency.
- Current limitations in Ontario – such as limitations in scope of practice – can create unnecessary extra steps for patients.
  - For example, in situations where a prescription is required, patients may receive a vaccine recommendation at the pharmacy, but must leave the pharmacy, book or wait for an appointment with another healthcare provider (e.g., family physician or nurse practitioner, if they have one), obtain a prescription, return to the pharmacy to fill the prescription, and then potentially go back to the other healthcare provider for administration of the vaccine.
- The Action Plan recommends strategies to overcome regulatory and policy, financial, operational and public awareness barriers that make it challenging for Ontario patients to access vaccines and protect their health.
- Among them, the recommendation to expand pharmacists' scope of practice to include prescribing authority for all vaccines supports a coordinated, team-based model of care and enhances the patient's care journey.
- Allowing pharmacists to prescribe all vaccines would:
  - Make it easier for many patients to get their shots faster and protect themselves against serious illness
  - Eliminate unnecessary regulatory hurdles that contribute to declining immunization rates
  - Support the Ontario government's goal of providing patients connected care closer to home
- OPA and system partners are ready to work collaboratively with government to advance patient-centred solutions.

## Key Messages For General Public/Media

- Vaccination is the best defence against many serious diseases, but too many Ontarians still face barriers to getting vaccinated.
- Community pharmacists are trusted healthcare professionals who already play a major role in delivering vaccines in local communities.
- Pharmacies offer convenient hours, walk-in access, and locations close to where people live and work.
- However, outdated system rules can still create unnecessary steps that make it harder for people to get vaccinated.
- The Vaccine Access Action Plan (VAAP) is a patient-centred initiative led by the Ontario Pharmacists Association to identify barriers and propose practical solutions to improve vaccine access through community pharmacies.
- The VAAP outlines practical, patient-centred recommendations to make vaccine access easier, more consistent, and more convenient for Ontarians through community pharmacies.
- As part of the recommendations to expand pharmacists' scope of practice, pharmacists should be enabled to prescribe vaccines, streamlining the patient care journey and preventing delays to immunization.
  - For example, today in Ontario, a patient seeking a shingles vaccine may need to obtain a prescription from another provider for insurance coverage purposes before a pharmacist can proceed with dispensing the vaccine and administering it, thus requiring an additional step and visit in the patient journey.
  - In the future, if pharmacists were able to prescribe vaccines, the pharmacist could assess, prescribe (if necessary), dispense and vaccinate the patient all in one visit – a true one-stop experience for patients.
- These changes are about making better use of the healthcare professionals Ontarians already know and trust.
- At its core, the VAAP is focused on improving timely, equitable access to vaccines and strengthening the overall health care system.

# Improving Vaccine Access Through Community Pharmacies



A PRACTICAL, **PATIENT-CENTRED** ROADMAP FOR ONTARIO

## The Challenge

Vaccination is one of the most effective tools to protect against vaccine-preventable diseases. Yet immunization rates are declining, and many Ontarians continue to face barriers to timely access. Despite being among the most accessible healthcare providers, the role of pharmacy professionals remains limited by outdated regulatory, financial, and system constraints.

## The Opportunity

Community pharmacy professionals are uniquely positioned to improve vaccine access and have demonstrated their value through large-scale influenza and COVID-19 immunization efforts.

Highly trained and trusted healthcare providers	91% of Ontarians live within 5 km of a pharmacy	Proven capacity to safely deliver vaccines at scale
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With the right policy and system supports, community pharmacies can play an even greater role in improving timely and equitable vaccine access.

## The Vaccine Access Action Plan

The Ontario Pharmacists Association (OPA) launched the **Vaccine Access Action Plan (VAAP)** to identify the key challenges limiting vaccine access in Ontario and to put forward practical, evidence-informed solutions to improve access through community pharmacies.

Guided by a multi-disciplinary advisory committee including pharmacists, physicians, patient advocates and public health experts and supported by targeted research and cross-jurisdictional analysis, the VAAP delivers a coordinated set of recommendations to:

- Improve timely and equitable vaccine access
- Reduce unnecessary steps in the patient journey
- Better leverage the pharmacy workforce
- Strengthen team-based care across Ontario



to **expand pharmacists' scope of practice**

ing a shingles vaccine. Despite the  
nt cannot receive it without a prescription  
e coverage purposes. As a result, **the**  
**appointment** (if they have a provider),  
to fill the prescription and have it  
lent journey.



Makes the patient journey more seamless, **removing unnecessary steps and delays** to access treatment



Supports patients without access to a family physician or nurse practitioner



Improves **system efficiency**



Better leverages an **existing, trusted workforce**

Enabling pharmacists to prescribe vaccines in addition to their existing authority to administer them would help modernize Ontario's immunization framework and improve timely protection for Ontarians.

[Download PDF](#)



Vaccination rates  
are declining – but  
access doesn't have to.

Vaccination rates are declining – but access doesn't have to.

The Vaccine Access Action Plan outlines practical solutions to improve timely access through community pharmacies.

Learn more: <https://www.opatoday.com/vaap/>

#VaccinesWork  
#PharmacyCare

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Community pharmacies  
are one of the **most**  
**accessible points of**  
**care in Ontario.**

Community pharmacies are one of the most accessible points of care in Ontario.

It's time to fully leverage pharmacy professionals to improve vaccine access.

Learn more: <https://www.opatoday.com/vaap/>

#HealthSystem  
#Immunization

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**Patients shouldn't face unnecessary steps to get vaccinated.**



ONTARIO PHARMACISTS ASSOCIATION

Patients shouldn't face unnecessary steps to get vaccinated.

The Vaccine Access Action Plan highlights practical ways to streamline care – including enabling pharmacists to practice to their full scope.

Learn more: <https://www.opatoday.com/vaap/>

#VaccineAccess

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ONTARIO PHARMACISTS ASSOCIATION

**Pharmacists are trained, trusted, and ready to do more.**

Pharmacists are trained, trusted, and ready to do more.

Expanding pharmacists' scope of practice is a key step to improving vaccine access across Ontario.

Learn more: <https://www.opatoday.com/vaap/>

#PharmacyLeadership

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# Frequently Asked Questions

## Q1. What is the Vaccine Access Action Plan (VAAP)?

The VAAP is a patient-centred initiative led by the Ontario Pharmacists Association to identify barriers and propose practical solutions to improve vaccine access through community pharmacies.

## Q2. Why is this needed now?

Vaccination rates are declining across Canada, increasing the risk of vaccine-preventable disease outbreaks.

At the same time, many Ontarians face barriers to timely immunization, including lack of primary care access and system complexity.

## Q3. What role do pharmacy professionals currently play?

Pharmacy professionals already administer vaccines for multiple preventable diseases and have administered millions of influenza and COVID-19 vaccine doses during recent public health campaigns. However, regulatory and system barriers limit their full impact on improving vaccination coverage and system efficiency.

## Q4. What does the report recommend related to scope of practice?

The Action Plan recommends expanding pharmacists' and pharmacy technicians' scopes of practice. This includes enabling pharmacists prescribing authority for all vaccines, with the goal of streamlining access and improving the patient journey.

## Q5. How does enabling pharmacists to have prescriptive authority for vaccines help patients?

It would:

- Reduce unnecessary steps in the patient care journey

- Improve timely access to vaccines
- Support patients without access to primary care
- Reduce system inefficiencies
- Improve overall vaccine uptake

## Q6. Is this about replacing other providers?

No. The VAAP supports collaborative, team-based care. Expanding access to vaccines through community pharmacy-based solutions serves to complement – not replace – other providers and helps the system work more efficiently.

## Q7. What else does the Action Plan address?

The VAAP also identifies barriers related to:

- Funding and insurance coverage
- Workforce capacity
- Public awareness and hesitancy
- System integration and information sharing

## Q8. How should the call to action be framed for government?

When engaging with government, the call to action should emphasize collaboration, readiness and shared outcomes. For example:

- OPA and our system partners are ready to work collaboratively with the government to advance the patient-centred solutions outlined in the VAAP.
- With your support, we can action these recommendations to expand vaccine access through community pharmacies across the province and better protect Ontarians from vaccine-preventable diseases.
- We look forward to working together to advance this important work.



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in Practice and Care