III. REDUCE VACCINE COST FOR PARENTS

To reduce vaccine cost as a barrier to vaccination, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services will initiate the Vaccines for Children program on October 1, 1994. This program, which is incorporated under section 1928 of the Social Security Act, requires the Federal government to purchase vaccines from manufacturers and provide them at no cost to participating public and private health care providers. In fiscal year 1995, these activities will amount to a total of over $400 million.

The vaccines may be used for children aged 0-18 years who are eligible for Medicaid, are without health insurance, or are American Indian. Children with health insurance who are served by federally qualified health centers also will be able to receive free vaccines if their insurance does not cover vaccination. States will be permitted to purchase additional vaccines at reduced Federal contract prices for distribution to all providers. Efforts at the national, state, and local levels will be initiated to include immunization benefits in all types of health insurance policies. The action steps reflect the advice of a wide range of public health groups, such as other Federal agencies, private health care providers, state and local health departments, and others.

Currently, twelve states have universal vaccine distribution systems. These systems provide free vaccines to all public and private providers in the state. Because of the extensive, additional vaccine resources provided to states by the Vaccines for Children Program, twelve additional states have indicated their interest to develop such universal distribution systems.

Objective 1: Implement the Vaccines for Children (VFC) program

Action Steps:

a. Develop, implement, and maintain an automated system to purchase and distribute vaccines to approved providers

b. Develop, implement, and maintain a vaccine reporting and accountability system

c. Provide ongoing guidance to state and other agencies which will help operate the program

d. Work with the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices to develop schedules and dosages, and describe vaccine contraindications as mandated by the Vaccines for Children legislation