

# Communicating Effectively About Immunization: A Guideline for Immunization Providers in New Brunswick

## Preamble:

Health-care providers play an important role in the success of the New Brunswick Immunization Program. Not only do they need the skills and knowledge related to vaccines and immunization, but they require an expertise in communicating information about immunization - the “how to” is just as important as the information itself. Effective communication is necessary for the informed decision-making partnership that is required as part of the informed consent process. Refer to the NBIPG document - *Standards for Consent for Immunization*.

## Strategies for successful communication:

Successful communication involves a conversation between the care provider and the client/patient. It is imperative that health-care providers provide accurate information. Consider the following in your parent and client/patient encounters:

1. **Take the time to listen.** Parents and clients/patients may have many questions. Make sure you hear and understand what they are asking; acknowledge their concerns and respond with current and correct information. If you do not know, say you will find out and get back to them. It is not possible for everyone to know all the answers.
2. **Ask questions.** Be sure that parents and clients/patients understand your response by asking questions. If they do not ask questions, encourage discussion by asking open-ended questions.
3. **Provide information.** As an immunization provider, you first need to be informed; make sure you have the most current information. When providing information to the individual, take into account what he or she knows and what level of detail he or she needs. Have ready reliable and appropriate resources for parents and clients/patients.
4. **Respect differences of opinions.** Determine the strength of these opinions and the underlying reasons for them. If they are founded in myths or misinformation, provide clarity and evidence based information.
5. **Convey the risks and benefits of the vaccine openly and fairly.**

## References:

1. *Canadian Immunization Guide, 2007, Part I – Communicating Effectively about Immunization*, <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/publicat/cig-gci/index-eng.php>.
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Provider Resources for Vaccine Conversations with Parents*, <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/spec-grps/hcp/conversations.htm>.
3. Ekos Research/Public Health Agency of Canada - *Survey of Parents on the Key Issues Related to Immunization*, <http://resources.cpha.ca/CCIAP/data/I1792e.pdf>.