

# Suggestions for skill practice

In order to provide immunization services, health workers must have adequate knowledge of the target diseases, the vaccines, the cold chain, and injection safety. In order to perform their jobs effectively and safely, they must possess certain psychomotor, communication, and organizational skills.

Health workers can acquire or refresh their knowledge by reading the modules in Immunization in Practice and doing the exercises in the Learning Activities Manual, either in groups or individually.

In order to perform their jobs, however, they need skills, guidance from experienced people, and practice. Master trainers and facilitators must organize skill-building exercises during training. They must demonstrate correct procedures and observe and provide feedback to participants as they practice the skills. So participants can master the skills without doing harm, they must first practice in safe settings where they can make mistakes. When both you and they are confident of their skills, the participants must practice in a real clinical setting. Even then, they must be supervised closely.

Below are suggestions for skill practice activities that can be incorporated into Immunization in Practice Modules.

## **Module 3: The Cold Chain**

- Ask participants to load a refrigerator of the type found in local health centres with vaccines, diluent, water bottles, and ice packs.
- Ask participants to load a vaccine carrier of the type found in local health centres with vaccines, diluent, and ice packs.
- Ask each participant to practice reading the types of thermometers and other monitors used in their health centres. Place the thermometers in various locations so that different temperatures may be read.
- Ask each participant to fill in a temperature chart using data that you provide.
- Freeze some DTP, TT, and hepatitis B vaccines and then thaw them. Ask each participant to use the **shake test** to compare these vaccines with others from the same manufacturer and batch number that have never been frozen.

## **Module 4: Ensuring Safe Injections**

- Practice using AD syringes
- Give safety boxes to the participants and ask them to follow the steps for disposing of syringes and needles.

## **Module 5: Planning Immunization Sessions**

- Provide the equipment needed for an immunization session. Ask the participants to arrange the furniture and equipment in the classroom to represent a fixed or outreach immunization site. They should label the stations and show how to guide the flow of mothers and children.

- Alternatively, ask the participants to draw maps showing the arrangements for immunization sessions in their health centres. Ask them to identify problems associated with the arrangements and to give solutions.

### ***Involving the community***

- To practice techniques for providing health education to small groups, ask each participant to role play by leading discussions while others in the course act as members of a community. Then, in clinical practice, have the participants practice their communication skills with groups of real mothers.
- Through role playing, ask participants to practice techniques for working with community leaders to solve problems, such as those connected with community mobilisation and the scheduling of immunization sessions.

## **Module 6: Holding an Immunization Session**

### ***Registering and assessing clients***

--Record-keeping skill practice:

- Ask each participant to enter data that you provide orally on blank immunization cards and patient register pages. Make sure to provide the kind of forms used in your immunization programme.

--Client assessment skill practice – role play. Each participant should play the role of health worker in a number of situations. These situations should increase in complexity until eventually the “health worker” is trying to communicate with nervous “parents” while giving immunizations and carrying out other tasks in a busy, noisy session.

- Ask a participant to play the role of a health worker who is screening a child for immunization. Ask another participant to play the role of a child or a parent. Provide her or him with information about the age, immunization status, and health of the child. The “health worker” has to decide what vaccines and doses to give the “child”.
- After mastering the injection techniques, the participants should practice communication skills with real parents and children in clinical practice.

--Combined patient assessment and record-keeping skill practice:

- Ask “health workers” in the above roleplay not only to interview the “parent”, but also to complete the immunization card and to register the “mother” or “child”.

--Clinical practice

- When their assessment and registration skills are developed, each participant should practice under supervision with real parents and children in a health centre.

### ***Preparing vaccines***

- Ask each participant to practice each of the following procedures, initially in the classroom and then in the clinic under careful supervision: washing hands, checking vial labels, reading a vaccine vial monitor, opening a vial and ampoule, drawing vaccine from the vial, and reconstituting vaccines. If your country uses AD syringes, practice using them.

### ***Giving injections***

- Ask each participant to practice positioning a child and administering each vaccine. Practice first in the classroom and then in the health centre under supervision. Each participant should practice giving every vaccine until he or she has mastered the techniques.

- A doll may be used in the classroom in order to practice positioning. Use boiled potatoes to practice intradermal injections and oranges for other injections.
- After successfully practicing on potatoes and oranges and before practicing on mothers and children, participants in some training programmes practice giving injections to each other.

## **Module 7: Reporting, Monitoring, and Evaluating**

### ***Practicing record-keeping skills***

- Ask each participant to enter data you provide on blank tally sheets, immunization monitoring charts, and monthly immunization reports of the kind used in your immunization programme.

### ***Practicing analytical skill***

- Ask the participants to analyse the data on forms that they or others have filled in. Make sure they can explain what each piece of data means and how they can use the data to make decisions about their services.