

Abstract

Immunizations are one of the greatest public health achievements, offering evidence-based opportunities for preventing infectious diseases. Despite the support for immunizations, Alaska lags behind the nation for immunization coverage rates.

The Alaska Immunization Program strives to improve immunization coverage rates through a variety of methods, including enhanced healthcare provider education, media campaigns, and working with community partners. Two evidence-based strategies for improvement feature prominently in efforts to improve immunization rates: AFIX and Reminder/Recall.



Figure 1. Alaska Immunization Program components and responsibilities

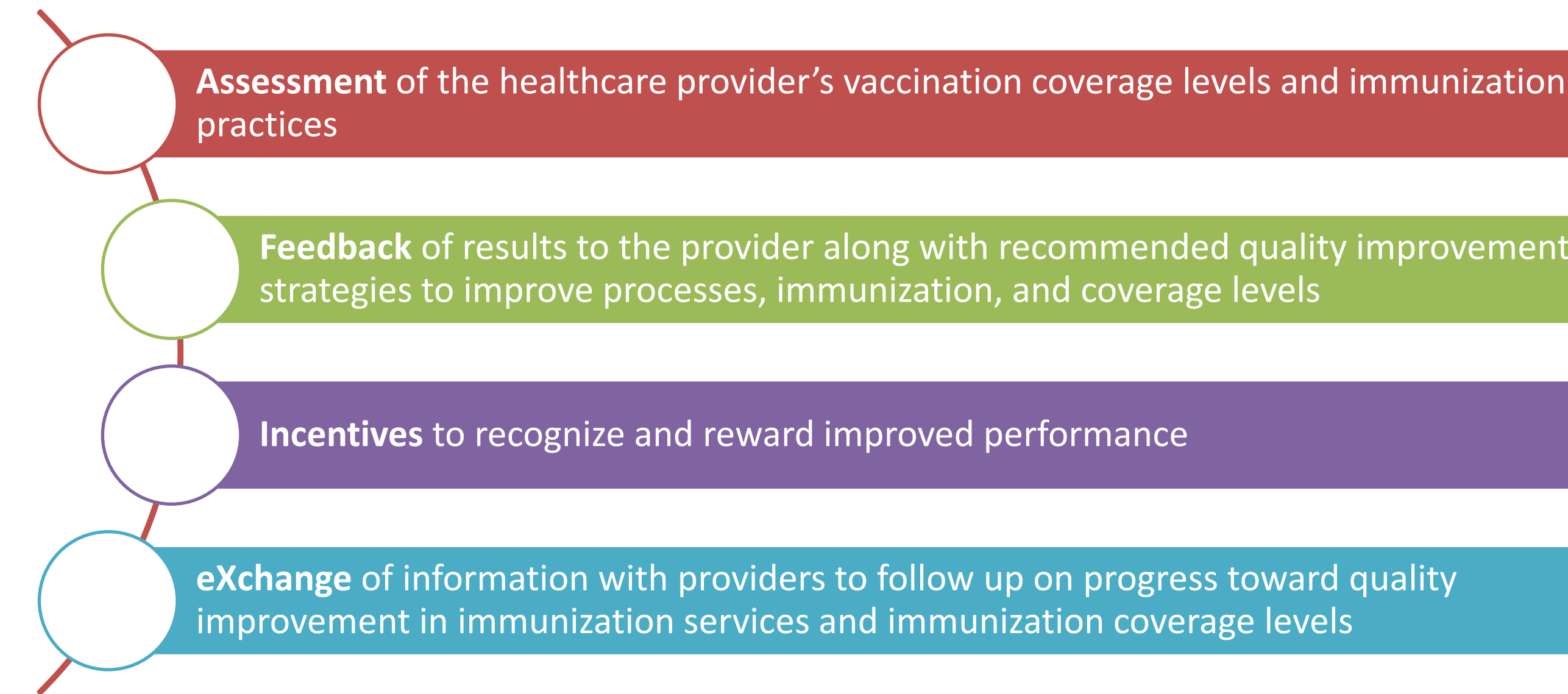
Introduction

The mission of the Immunization Program is to prevent and control vaccine preventable disease in Alaska. This goal is accomplished through a variety of activities, both by the Alaska Immunization Program, and by healthcare providers and partners. The Alaska Immunization Program strives to:

- Provide vaccines to healthcare providers at no charge¹
 - Provide an immunization information system for use by healthcare providers and schools to maintain consolidated immunization records for Alaskans of all ages¹
 - Ensure school and childcare compliance with immunization regulations¹
 - Provide immunization education and training for healthcare providers and the general public¹
 - Coordinate surveillance and control efforts for vaccine preventable diseases¹
 - Support efforts to increase vaccinations for all Alaskans¹
- Figure 1 is a graphic representation of the multifaceted nature of the program.

Strategies for Improvement: AFIX

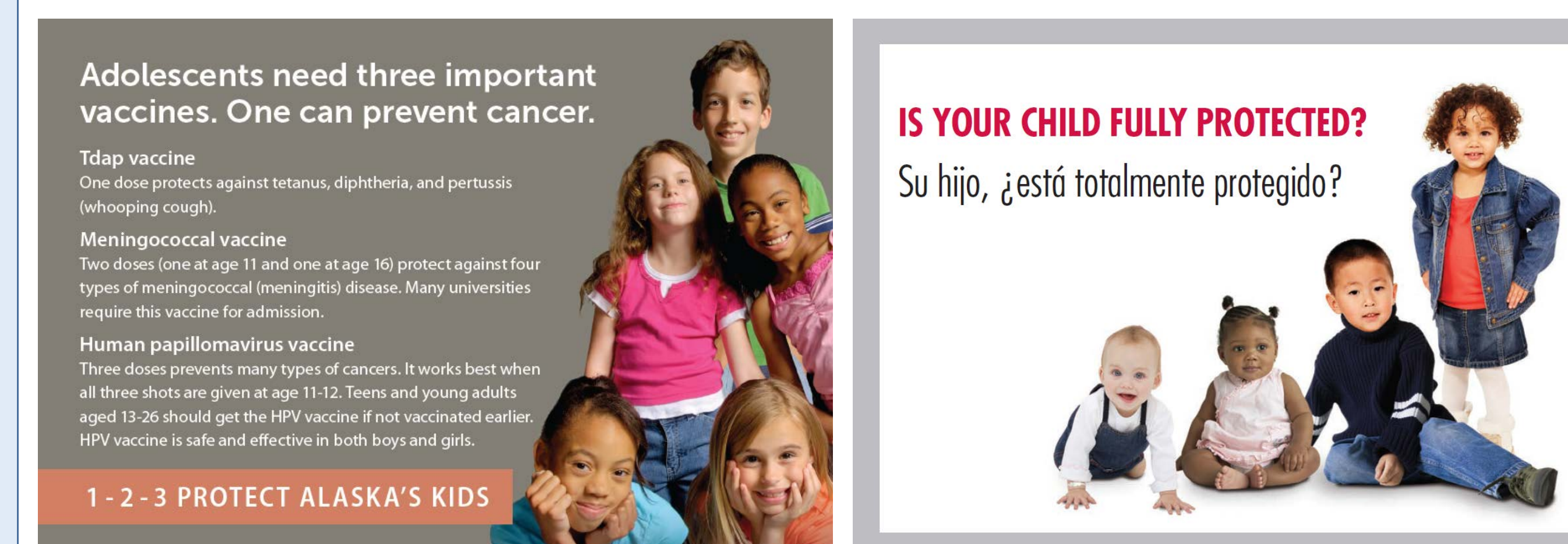
AFIX is an evidence-based intervention that is a partnership between the Alaska Immunization Program and an individual medical provider. The multi-step process takes 3-6 months to complete and incorporates 4 stages:



In 2017, the Alaska Immunization Program AFIX Coordinator conducted 34 AFIX visits with providers, including 22 combined childhood/adolescent AFIX visits, and 12 childhood only AFIX visits.

Strategies for Improvement: Reminder / Recall

Reminder / Recall is a method of utilizing electronic health records or the statewide Immunization Information System, VacTrAK, to determine which patients need a reminder to receive an immunization. A reminder in the form of a postcard, card, email, or phone call is delivered to the patient to recall them to the provider's office to receive their immunization.



In 2016, 40,000 reminder recall postcards (above left) were sent to adolescents statewide to encourage getting up-to-date on the adolescent vaccine triad: Tdap, Meningococcal, and HPV vaccines.

Beginning in July 2017, quarterly cards are delivered statewide to parents of children aged 6 through 24 months missing any vaccinations (above right). To date, over 21,000 cards have been delivered, with a return rate via USPS of approximately 2%.

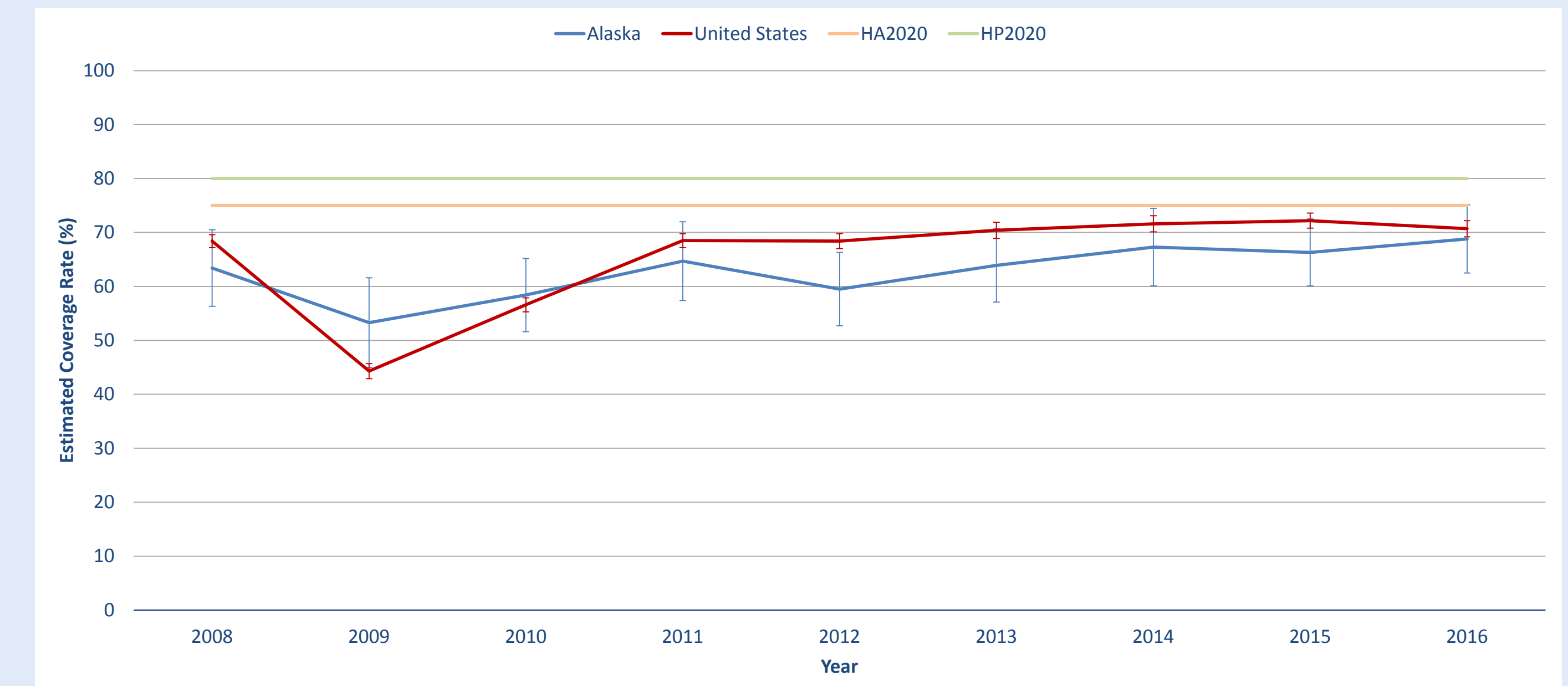


Figure 2. Combined 7-vaccine Series coverage among children 19 through 35 months old in Alaska and the United States, with 95% Confidence Interval, National Immunization Survey (NIS), 2008 - 2016²

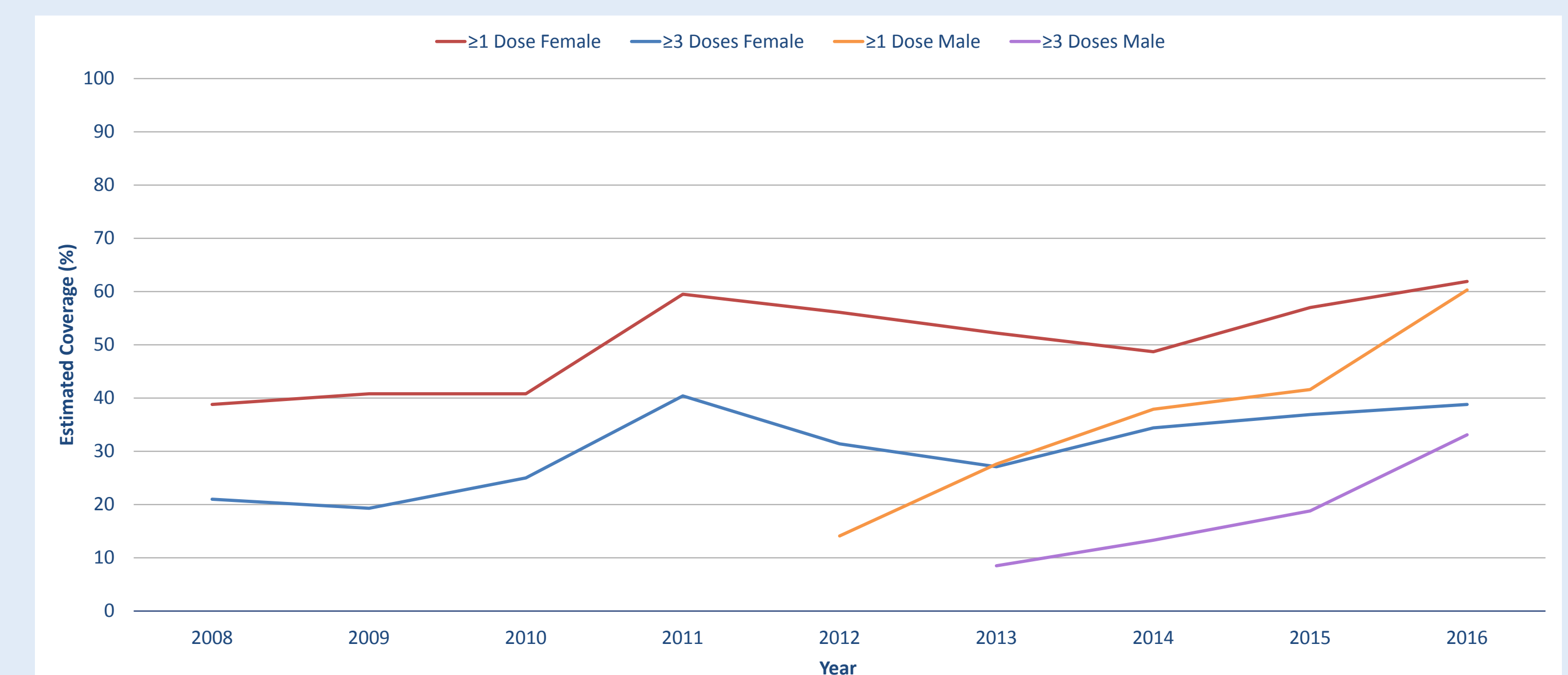


Figure 3. Human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination coverage among adolescents 13 through 17 years old in Alaska, National Immunization Survey (NIS), 2008 - 2016³

Discussion

Immunization coverage rates for the 7-vaccine child series have increased from 2007 to 2016 (Figure 2). While Alaska remains below the Healthy People and Health Alaskans 2020 goals, Alaska is on track to reach the target of 75% coverage for Healthy Alaskans 2020⁴.

HPV coverage for both male and female adolescents aged 13 through 17 years in Alaska are trending upwards (Figure 3). In 2016, Alaskan males had a significant increase for one or more doses of HPV.

Conclusions

Increasing coverage rates in NIS data is an encouraging trend. Coupled with increased media outreach, provider education, continued AFIX, and reminder / recall efforts, immunization coverage rates may continue to increase in Alaska. Improved coverage rates result in a decrease in vaccine-preventable diseases and healthier communities.

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Acknowledgements

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