



Assessment, Feedback, Incentives and Exchange (AFIX) Project for Ohio Helpful Tips: Feedback Frequent Questions and Challenges

- **What is your training/background?**
 - First determine if the individual is trying to start a conversation, wants to judge how much confidence to place in you or is looking for a reason not to participate in feedback. Your degree and education is irrelevant. Your expertise in a proven national strategy for improving vaccination services is paramount. **Focus attention not on your own knowledge, but on the fact that certain strategies have been clearly shown to be effective at improving immunization practices.** Also, describe who you've helped and how (without revealing proprietary or sensitive information). Be specific and relate the specific details to conditions you perceive to be relevant to the feedback you think relevant to that clinic.
- **How do you determine your sample size? (or other challenges to your methodology: P value, statistical significance, CoCASA algorithms, etc)**
 - First determine if the person is trying to understand how to interpret your feedback or is looking for a reason not to participate in feedback. In either case describing the methodology is a trap and will NOT address the issues inherent in either motivation. AFIX is based on dialogue! Describe your motivation for providing the feedback and ask questions. What does the provider see as major challenges? What have they tried? What are the pressures and constraints they experience in trying to provide vaccinations to their patients? The data are merely a starting point for the important discussions about vaccination practices and every attempt needs to be made to keep the discussion at this level. Most attempts to explain methodology will simply result in fruitless technical discussion unrelated to the everyday practices of the office.
- **I think you've misread our charts (forms, reports, policy, procedures)...**
 - Though unlikely, it is possible and should be acknowledged without being either defensive or apologetic that you have misunderstood something in their charts or forms. Have the provider walk you through the form and use the opportunity to ask if there have ever been problems with new employees misinterpreting forms. This can lead into discussion, based on your observations, about either the consistency of form usage (e.g. are old and new forms intermingled, are forms consistently placed in the chart and/or in the correct location, is the form adequate for immunization tasks)

or the need for training (how are staff trained to take and document orders, how are new employees trained and old ones retrained, how are policies disseminated or changes in immunization schedules communicated).

- **That's how we used to do this, but we changed a few months ago...**
 - Much like the previous question/challenge, this is an opportunity to discuss a common problem for providers: **implementing change**. Since the whole intent of AFIX feedback is to bring about improvements in a process, discussing how readily staff accept change is a crucial element in developing any implementation plan.
- **I agree but our director (managed care contract, patients) require (prefer, like) us to do it that way...**
 - All providers have challenging circumstances affecting efforts to change, otherwise change would be easy. This is an opportunity to discuss what those are, what the provider has identified as effective ways of addressing those challenges and what you have seen work in other facilities facing those same challenges. Be specific!
- **We serve a unique population...**
 - What about the population served drives modification of other preventive services? Is the population highly transient, resistant to vaccinations, noncompliant, demanding or suspicious? Each of these issues is addressable with different strategies offering continued dialogue in creating the AFIX partnership.

Also, regardless of the population served, the AFIX discussion is about what the providers and staff can do more effectively when patients are in the office. Whether they are only a safety-net clinic or a clinic whose patients generally oppose vaccines, there are always ways to improve.

Key Points about Feedbacks

- **The risks of focusing solely on immunization coverage levels (outcomes) in an AFIX Feedback:**
 - Inability to provide meaningful reasons for the rates and reasons for differences in rates
 - Difficulty interpreting the importance of the rate or how to improve
 - Subject to debate and contention
 - Processes, the real points of change, may never be addressed or improved
- **Focusing on the process of improving (rather than focusing solely on rates) means:**
 - Focusing on process measures
 - Missed opportunities
 - Late starts

- Recall/reminder
 - See the Immunization Action Coalition website and their free download titled, “Suggestions to Improve Your Immunization Services” for many other excellent ideas
 - Focusing on processes that can be easily understood and measured
 - Focusing on improving systems, not fixing single problems
- **The rewards of focusing on process more than outcomes:**
 - Everyone can improve (regardless of the coverage rate)
 - Outcomes will follow effective processes. Focusing on the process will improve both the process and the outcomes.

Process measures are direct measures of quality of care (missed opportunities, recall/reminder, screening at every visit, etc.) and they generally are less open to misunderstanding or misinterpretation than is an outcome measure. **Reward process improvements, not only outcomes!**

Feedback, as a learning collaboration, should provide:

- **Information that is timely** about what was observed or recorded
- **Guidance** as to how performance can be improved
- **Specifics** rather than broad-ranging comments
- **Examples** and **models** showing what can be improved and how
- A **valuing** of provider work
- **Time** for providers to act upon advice
- **Benefits** of proposed changes
- **Forward-leaning direction** about what can be done rather than what was done
- **Engagement** of the provider in developing the action plan
- **“Tools”** that can be used for implementing the agreed upon action plan

Effective AFIX Feedbacks are More than a “Rate”