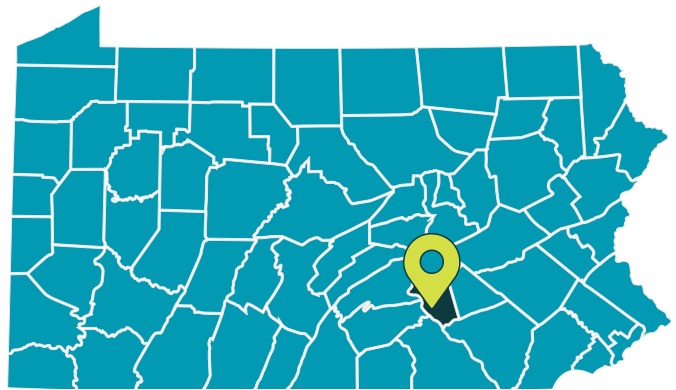


# Pennsylvania

Pennsylvania  
Department of Health  
Website: [Immunizations \(pa.gov\)](https://immunizations.pa.gov)

Pennsylvania  
Immunization Coalition  
Website: [immunizepa.org](https://immunizepa.org)



## Community Profile

As of 2023, Pennsylvania is the fifth most populous state in the United States, with nearly 13 million residents spread across 46,000 square miles and a population density of 290.6 per mile. Administratively, it is divided into 67 counties featuring a diverse landscape of mountains, rivers, and forests. Its most populous cities are Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, and Allentown.



In terms of sociodemographic factors,



**93.5%**

have health insurance



**3.4%**

unemployment rate



**11.8%**

poverty rate



**\$73,170**

median income



**91.7%**

hold a high school diploma



**33.8%**

have a bachelor's degree or higher

## Coalition Overview

The Pennsylvania Immunization Coalition aims to connect Pennsylvania residents to timely and effective vaccines across their lifespan. Their work includes education, awareness, community outreach, partnership development, media relations, clinical support, and advocacy.



The coalition is led by a board of directors and comprised of 16 local coalitions across the state. Funding flows from the state immunization program to the state coalition and then is distributed to local coalitions to support their work. The majority of the funding comes from the CDC. Features of the coalition include newly enhanced bylaws and financial controls, active board membership, and diverse representation from community organizations, associations, and corporate partners.

## Structure

The coalition's board is composed of volunteers, including a chair, vice chair, treasurer/secretary, and board members. Additionally, there are two non-voting members of the board: the directors of the state immunization program and the Philadelphia Immunization Program. This board is supported by professional staff, including a program operations manager, program coordinator, consultant, and regional coordinators.

## Funding

The coalition's funding model has evolved over the years. Previously, 2% of local health department funds went to local immunization coalitions. Currently, immunization funding flows from CDC to the state immunization program, then to the state coalition, and finally to local coalitions through a grant program that the state coalition manages. COVID-19 pandemic funding was an important part of financial support, allowing for reassessment and reallocation of funds to underfunded areas.

State and local coalitions are structured as 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations, enabling them to receive donations and grant funding. Grants are a significant source of funding, and the coalition has invested time in educating local coalitions about grant writing and funding opportunities. Some local coalitions also raise funds through hosting annual meetings.

## Coalition Activities

Some of the main activities of the coalition are:

- Conducting [social media campaigns](#)
- Conducting billboard campaigns
- Creation of a [Parents Guide to Childhood Immunizations](#)
- Supporting the coalitions and community partners across the Commonwealth
- Hosting the 2024 [National Conference for Immunization Coalitions and Partnerships](#)
- Hosting an annual state coalition conference

For more information about activities that the coalition is involved in see the [coalition's homepage](#).

## Successes

### Administrative Improvements

The Pennsylvania Immunization Coalition is focusing on organizational sustainability. They have successfully revised their bylaws, assessed their board composition and organizational structure, and allocated time for leadership transitions. Previously, the coalition struggled to fill all board positions, but they have since recruited passionate leaders with the time and dedication to serve. The coalition is also analyzing its financial controls to ensure long-term funding sustainability.

### Creating the Coalition Grant Program

A few years ago, the state health department had contracts with local health departments that required them to allocate 2% of their funding for local immunization coalitions. However, if a local coalition was in an area that didn't have a local health department, they were missing out on funding. To ensure local coalitions had access to funds, the state changed this funding structure by sending funding directly to the state coalition which set up a grant program that all the coalitions can access.

### National Conference for Immunization Coalitions and Partnerships (NCICP)

The state coalition, with the support of the state immunization program, hosted NCICP in Philadelphia for the first time in the conference's history. It was successful because it brought in funding through attendee and exhibitor registration, but it was also a chance for the coalition and immunization program to work together on a challenging, but rewarding, task.

## Partnership

The state immunization program is a key partner to the coalition's success. The relationship between the immunization program manager and the Chair of the PAIC Board is characterized by trust, respect, transparency, and open communication. They share program goals and data promptly, contributing to an effective partnership.

The coalition also has numerous [partnerships with community organizations](#), associations, and centers at the local level. These partnerships facilitate hands-on immunization work, such as vaccine clinics and community education. The grassroots work enabled by coalition grants helps build trust and dispel misinformation, particularly in historically marginalized and medically underserved communities.

## Challenges

Sustaining coalition leadership with an all-volunteer board at both the state and local levels can be challenging. During the pandemic, burnout among leadership and staff was significant.

Another challenge for the coalition is the lack of trust from historically marginalized and medically underserved communities who were not at the table when the coalition was starting. Over time, coalition leadership has engaged these groups through their community leaders and organizations, vaccine clinics, and education events to build and sustain trust. With these partnerships in place, the coalition can bring community leaders to the table and ensure they are included in immunization decision-making and planning. Building and maintaining these partnerships is key to fostering trust across historically marginalized communities.

*"When we started with coalition building, we realized we didn't have individuals from our minority populations - our Latino, Asian American, and Black communities at the table so there was a lot of trust issues. I quickly realized that coalition membership needs to match the diversity of the community you are trying to reach."*

**Beth Till**, past Chair, PAIC Board.



## Advice for building and maintaining a coalition

The Chair, PAIC Board, and immunization program manager offered the following advice for program managers interested in expanding coalition work or starting a new coalition:

- Set coalition meetings to one hour, goal-oriented events by closely following an agenda, and encourage all to participate.
- Understand the immunization program's priorities for the year and identify where the coalition can support them.
- Ensure the coalition board, members, and partners understand the “why” of the coalition.
- Outline the immunization gaps and disease burden in the community by analyzing state immunization data from the state health department or [CDC](#).
- Identify and leverage connections with those energized about immunization.
- Work with the state immunization program manager early on when establishing your coalition.
- Engage with other coalitions, especially those in neighboring states.
- Connect with other coalitions through monthly [immunize.org](#) national director meetings.

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