



PRACTICAL GUIDE

FOR THE DESIGN, USE AND PROMOTION OF

HOME-BASED RECORDS

IN IMMUNIZATION PROGRAMMES



World Health Organization

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World Health
Organization

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Preface

Home-based vaccination records play an important role in documenting immunization services received by individuals, yet current evidence suggests these tools are too often underutilized. Furthermore, home-based records currently vary in complexity across and sometimes within countries and lack standardization in content. This observation is of little surprise as guidance on the content and design of home-based records to date has largely been limited to brief references within existing immunization texts.

Against this backdrop and in response to a recognized need for a more comprehensive guide on the design and implementation of home-based records, the World Health Organization (WHO) set up a project for the purpose of:

- (1) **Assessing** the current form and content of home-based childhood vaccination records;
- (2) **Identifying** critical elements of existing practices and documentation standards that reflect the importance of complete, timely, and accurate recording of information;
- (3) **Developing** specifications for a prototype home-based record and testing its use;
- (4) **Publishing** and disseminating a guide on home-based vaccination records and promoting their use in immunization programmes.

This practical guide, developed by WHO in consultation with partners, is intended to provide direction to immunization programme managers and other national health programmes on how to improve the use and design of home-based records and to serve as a reference when developing or revising home-based records. This document will be useful in countries where there is low prevalence and utilization of home-based records; where stock-outs of home-based records occur; when a country is introducing a new vaccine; and other circumstances in which a country is considering a revision of the home-based record. The guidance within incorporates relevant experience and ideas observed across countries and current practices in the field, and can be applied in a wide variety of settings.

Keeping in mind that home-based records exist in various forms and may serve additional programmatic purposes beyond the recording of vaccinations, this document aims to facilitate greater standardization in the immunization content of home-based records while acknowledging that these tools are meant to be reviewed, adapted and implemented by national programmes to suit local health needs and priorities.



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What is a Home-based Vaccination Record?

A home-based vaccination record is a medical document (more often physical rather than electronic) — issued by a health authority (such as a national, provincial or district health department) on which an individual's history of vaccinations received (including the name and number of doses of vaccine(s) along with dates given) from all healthcare providers is recorded. In contrast to a facility-based record, the home-based record is maintained in the household by an individual or their caregiver (e.g., mother, father, grandparent, etc.) and brought to the health clinic/post to be completed by a health worker at each time of vaccination.



Home based vaccination records are normally provided to caregivers free of charge (gratis), and should be replaced if lost or damaged beyond repair.

Caregivers should be encouraged to bring the home-based record to every encounter the child has with the healthcare system, including sick- and well-visits. However, policies requiring presentation of the record should be considered with care, as some children may drop out of the system if the child is turned away from immunization services just because the caregiver forgot the child's record.

Home-based vaccination records can generally be classified into three broad groups:

- 1) **Vaccination only cards:** documents designed exclusively to record basic identifying information and immunization services received
- 2) **Vaccination plus cards:** more inclusive documents that record, in addition to vaccinations, a broader range of health services received, as well as child growth and development (e.g., child growth charts) and a limited set of basic information related to child survival (e.g., infant and young child feeding)

- 3) **More comprehensive child health books** that often include a record of birth characteristics, health services received beyond vaccination, growth charts, etc. These books also provide detailed guidance to parents in the areas of infant and young child feeding, developmental milestones, prevention of diarrhoea, malaria and other illnesses, and family planning.

A review of current practice found that home-based records of varying degrees of detail and complexity are in use across countries. In order to achieve wide applicability, this guide will focus primarily on the elements in the immunization component of these records used to record and monitor the child immunization series. However, the core concepts and principles extend to the design and implementation of more comprehensive home-based records, and also align with the increasing attention to the role of immunization beyond infancy and across the life-course.

ALTERNATIVE TERMINOLOGY FOR HOME-BASED RECORDS

Home-based records have different names and take on continuously evolving forms across countries. Below is a sample of the variety of terms used for referring to home-based records:



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