



**OFFICE OF THE CITY CONTROLLER
CITY OF PHILADELPHIA**

1230 Municipal Services Building
1401 John F. Kennedy Boulevard
Philadelphia, PA 19102

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

April 18, 2023

CONTACT: Allison Steele, 609-220-6739

**Controller’s Audit Urges Health Department to
Improve Compliance with Federal Vaccine Program**

Dept. of Health will develop alternate methods to oversee vaccine storage & recordkeeping

PHILADELPHIA – As a result of the City Controller’s Office’s latest audit of the city’s federal grants programs, the Department of Public Health (DPH) is developing alternate methods to oversee accountability for vaccine storage and safeguarding in the event of another major health crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic.

Auditors found that during the height of the pandemic, the DPH failed to provide oversight of its medical providers to ensure that accountability was maintained for vaccine inventory records, proper storage and safeguarding, and eligibility screening for the Vaccine for Children (VFC) program. The audit period covered the fiscal year 2021.

The vaccines referenced in the audit were not associated with the COVID-19 virus. The audit concerns records for the city’s immunization program that is funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

When staff and resources were reallocated to assist with COVID-19 vaccine sites around the city, the department did not have a plan in place to ensure proper control and accountability of the city’s existing federal vaccine program, the audit found.

“A lack of proper oversight of the program can result in vaccines being improperly safeguarded or wasted,” said Charles Edacheril, Acting City Controller. “Additionally, if we don’t have complete or up-to-date records for administered vaccines, that could result in health issues for those who need to receive those vaccines.”

The DPH responded to the audit with a corrective action plan, stating it acknowledges the finding. The department stated that as recommended by the Controller’s Office, it “will develop alternate methods to oversee accountability for vaccine storage and safeguarding. Please note this compliance challenge occurred in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic; which

necessitated an unprecedented response that focused on rapid and equitable distribution of live-saving vaccines.”

“It is encouraging that the city is using lessons learned from the pandemic as an opportunity to develop new methods that will ensure accountability if we’re ever again faced with a health crisis of this magnitude,” said Edacheril. “Our audits are meant to inform and impact change for the city. The DPH is stepping up to act, and we will continue to monitor as part of our ongoing audit work.”

All Office of the Controller audits can be viewed at <https://controller.phila.gov/>

###