Indiana State Department of Health Vaccines for Children Program  
Storage Unit Requirements

The Indiana Vaccines for Children Program has specific requirements for storage units. ISDH must certify that new providers have storage units that are in adherence with CDC and Indiana VFC guidelines prior to granting vaccine ordering privileges.

For information on purchasing a new storage unit, see the Storage Unit Purchasing Guide

Storage Unit Overview

*Combination units*: Have both refrigerator and freezer compartments. Prohibited for use in VFC Program

*Stand-alone units*: Either have a refrigerator or a freezer compartment, not both

*Household/commercial/domestic units*: Specifically designed for the storage of food, but are acceptable to be used as storage units for vaccine.

*Laboratory/pharmaceutical grade units*: Technologically engineered for the storage of temperature sensitive biological agents such as vaccine.

*Compact Standalone units*: Small refrigerator or freezer units. Available in household or pharmaceutical grade.

*Dorm-style/bar units*: Have a single exterior door and small freezer section. Prohibited for use in VFC Program

*Note*: Combination pharmaceutical grade units have separate temperature controls for the refrigerator and freezer compartments, allowing each compartment to maintain temperatures independently; therefore are permissible for the storage of VFC vaccine
Unacceptable Units: The following are prohibited for the storage of VFC vaccine, even temporarily

Combination Units (Not Acceptable for newly enrolled VFC providers): Have both refrigerator and freezer compartments

- Prohibited due to their inability to maintain separate temperatures for the refrigerator and freezer compartment and the risk of refrigerator component accidentally freezing vaccine.

Dormitory/Bar-style Units: Combination refrigerators and freezers with a single exterior door, and an external cooling plate that forms the freezer compartment. These units are unable to maintain temperatures for vaccine storage, and have been been shown to expose refrigerated vaccine to freezing temperatures.

Manual defrost units:

Manual defrost refrigerators are prohibited for use in the VFC program. These units have significant temperature variation and risk freezing vaccines.

Auto- defrost (also called frost-free) storage units regularly cycle warm air throughout the unit to remove ice buildup, and are highly recommended for vaccine storage. Manual defrost storage units, however, require active monitoring and removal of ice and frost build up. It is the provider’s responsibility to ensure manual defrost freezers are defrosted regularly, as frost buildup can affect the storage unit’s ability to maintain appropriate temperatures. While defrosting, vaccines must be temporarily stored in a VFC approved freezer.

Revised 1/11/2017
Convertible refrigerator units:
These units have an internal switch that converts an “all refrigerator unit” to an “all freezer unit”

Cryogenic freezers
These freezers reach temperatures well below -50.0 C (-58.0 F), too cold for frozen vaccines.

Acceptable Units

Pharmaceutical grade units (Best Practice)
- Highest quality vaccine storage unit
- Engineered for the storage of biologics
- Have excellent temperature stability
- Greater temperature uniformity throughout the unit than household/commercial units
- Pharmaceutical grade combination units are acceptable for VFC vaccine storage

Standalone Household/Commercial units
- Single storage unit that is either a refrigerator or freezer
- Designed for the storage of food, but are acceptable for vaccine storage
- Commercial-grade units are used primarily in the food industry, and are more superior than household units

Revised 1/11/2017
• Refrigerators **must** have auto defrost (self-defrosting) specifications (**manual defrost refrigerators are no longer allowed**)  

• Freezers are *recommended* to have auto defrosting

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**Standalone, Under-the Counter Units**

• **Single storage unit that is either a refrigerator or freezer**

• **Compact and space saving**

• Great for small offices with low VFC eligible patients

• Must be either household or pharmaceutical grade

• Refrigeration units **must** be self-defrosting

• Freezer units are *recommended* to be self-defrosting

*Revised 1/11/2017*
Prior to receiving vaccine ordering privileges, providers must submit a picture of their storage unit to certify adherence to CDC and ISDH VFC guidelines.