GOVERNMENT OF PUDUCHERRY

DIRECTORATE OF HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE SERVICES

OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY DIRCTOR IMMUNIZATION

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WRITE UP ON ADVERSE EVENTS FOLLOWING IMMUNIZATION (AEFI)

India's Universal Immunization program (UIP), targets almost 27 million newborns and 30 million pregnant women through 9 million sessions each year with the goal of protecting the individual and the public from vaccine preventable diseases. India is also the largest developing country manufacturer of vaccines in the world. It is the government's constant endeavor to not only to improve access, coverage and quality of immunization services but also target more diseases, causing infant and child morbidity and mortality by including newer vaccines that prevent them.

Vaccines used in national immunization programmes are extremely safe and effective. Nevertheless, no vaccine is perfectly safe, and adverse reactions can occur. In addition to the vaccines themselves, the process of immunization is a potential source of an adverse reaction.

An Adverse Events Following Immunization (AEFI), is any untoward medical occurrence which follows immunization and which does not necessarily have a causal relationship with the usage of the vaccine. The adverse event may be any unfavorable or unintended sigh, abnormal laboratory finding, symptom or disease.

Vaccines used in the country are safe and effective. However, like other pharmaceutical products, vaccines are not entirely risk-free and adverse events may occasionally follow vaccination. The adverse events following immunization surveillance program indicates the government's intent to ensure the quality and safety of vaccines given in the country. Adverse events reported following immunization are not always related to the vaccine or the process of vaccination and are usually coincidental. However, to maintain public confidence, it is necessary to strengthen the surveillance of all adverse events following immunization (AEFI) by detecting, reporting and investigating such events to carry out further remedial actions.

Adverse Events Following Immunization (AEFI) are usually mild but may on rare occasions be life-threatening. The majority of serious events reported after immunizations are coincidences and there is no casual relationship between the vaccine and the reported event. At times, however, these are caused by the vaccine or by an error in the administration or handling of the vaccine. Irrespective of the cause, when AEFI cause anxiety, people may refuse further immunization of their children, making the children susceptible to disabling and life-threatening Vaccine Preventable Diseases (VPDs).

Increased immunization coverage, mass campaigns and introduction of new vaccines and booster doses have increased vaccine use, leading to more vaccine reactions as well as more coincidental events. Immunization errors (previously known as "programme error") may also increase. Also, public alertness regarding vaccine safety has increased as a result of increased awareness and access to information through the electronic media.

It is essential to report, investigate and assess each Adverse events following immunization to determine whether a vaccine is causality linked to an AEFI or whether the reported AEFI is a mere coincidence.