Vaccine Safety Net

COMPANION DOCUMENT
Revised criteria for good information practices for websites with vaccine safety content

Version dated 16 June 2017

1 The revised criteria were endorsed by the Global Advisory Committee on Vaccine Safety on 17 September 2015
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3.3 If ad space is sold, the website should specify how it uses funds from these marketing activities.

3.4 The website may sell materials if they align with the website’s content. Content intended to promote or sell products or services should be clearly distinguished from the educational and scientific content.

4 Accountability to users

4.1 Users should be able to contact the owner of the website to report any technical issues, such as broken links, or to provide feedback. Multiple methods of contacting the owner of the website (e-mail address, electronic form, postal address) should be provided, but need not be posted on every page.

4.2 This information should be easily accessible from any page of the site, e.g. include link to the contact information in the footer or menu bar of every page or link back to the homepage.

4.3 Owner or representative should respond to user feedback in a timely and appropriate manner.

4.4 Number of business days for answering test question.

4.5 Websites offering interactive exchanges (e.g., chat room, ‘medical’ or similar advice in response to questions/comments) should disclose information about the moderator or clinician’s expertise and affiliations.

4.6 Websites should disclose how comments will be moderated.

5 Data protection and privacy

5.1 Websites should display a privacy statement or confidentiality policy that describes how the organization treats private or semi-private information such as e-mail addresses and telephone numbers if collected. Sites should not collect, use, or share personal data without the user’s specific affirmative consent. Users should be informed of use of cookies and any use of data they provide.

5.2 Websites should take reasonable steps to protect personal data (if collected) from unauthorized access.

6 Responsible partnering

6.1 VSN members are encouraged to partner with or link to other websites with the same high standards.

6.2 Websites should indicate when users are leaving the home site by using an external link icon, a disclaimer statement, or by opening a new window.

Content, Quality and Quantity (mandatory criteria)

7 Content, quality and quantity

7.1 Websites should provide a clear statement of the source for scientific, medical and health information, including author’s name, affiliations and any potential conflicts of interest the authors may have related to the content.

7.2 The date of last review or update should be clearly indicated on each webpage. The website should be updated as new information becomes available.

7.3 The website should include a statement of the procedure used for selection of site content, including a guarantee of the independence of the editorial process, the names and affiliations of the Editorial Board, and any review process.

7.4 Writing on the website should be professional, with proper grammar, spelling, and composition. Language should be clear, easy to read, and appropriate for intended users.

7.5 Hypertext links to other resources should be carefully selected and their content accurate, current, and credible.
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8.11 Website should be structured and follow a logical hierarchy for ease of navigation. ........................................ 49

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Introduction

The Vaccine Safety Net mission, vision and goals

Mission:
The Vaccine Safety Net is a WHO initiative aiming to help internet users find reliable information on vaccine safety.

Vision:
The Vaccine Safety Net strives to ensure that reliable, understandable, evidence-based information on the safety of vaccines is available on the web and readily found by all.

Goals:
The goals of the VSN are to facilitate easy access to reliable, understandable, evidence-based information on the safety of vaccines for internet users, regardless of their geographic location and language.

To collaborate at an international level to increase awareness about vaccines, reduce vaccine hesitancy and strengthen confidence in vaccines by:

- seeking to better understand internet users’ needs, behaviours and preferences;
- providing reliable information tailored to users’ needs;
- communicating vaccine safety information through a diversity of digital channels.

Background

The overall objective of the VSN is to facilitate the access of public health authorities, health professionals and the public to reliable information on vaccine safety via the internet. The VSN reports to and is advised by the Global Advisory Committee on Vaccine Safety (GACVS)\(^1\), established by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 1999 to respond promptly, efficiently, and with scientific rigor to vaccine safety issues of potential global importance.

At the outset of the project, a set of criteria for good information practices for websites with vaccine safety content was developed and endorsed by the GACVS. These criteria were reviewed and updated by the VSN working group in 2015 taking into account input provided by the GACVS as well as feedback from a cross-section of VSN members. The revised criteria were endorsed by the GACVS on 17 September 2015.

Websites (identified through direct inquiries from website managers, personnel working on the project, or suggested by external parties) are evaluated for their adherence to these criteria\(^2\). The VSN team also uses the criteria to re-evaluate VSN member websites. When sites are considered by evaluators to satisfactorily meet the criteria, VSN creates/updates the member’s webpage on the WHO website. The date of finalization of the evaluation/re-evaluation is displayed at the bottom of the webpage.

Government and academic websites are re-evaluated every two years, and private websites are re-evaluated every year.

All sites adhering to the criteria are listed on the World Health Organization (WHO) Global Vaccine safety website\(^3\):

http://www.who.int/vaccine_safety/initiative/communication/network/approved_vaccine_safety_website/en/

And on the VSN portal: http://www.vaccinesafetynet.org/vsn/network

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2. Corporate websites are not eligible for VSN membership.
3. The listing of a site does not indicate endorsement by WHO of the site’s content.
To learn more about the VSN website evaluation and re-evaluation process, please visit:
or http://www.vaccinesafetynet.org/vsn/join-vsn
Appendix A of this document contains a flowchart that describes the key steps in the VSN website evaluation and re/evaluation processes.

**Purpose**

The purpose of this document is to assist VSN candidates and VSN members to adequately address each criterion. This is a living document. It will be reviewed and updated by WHO on an as-needed basis.

**Content**

All of the criteria are listed in this document. The more complex criteria contain URLs pointing to examples and brief notes explaining what is expected.

The examples provided in this document are intended to illustrate a variety of approaches used by VSN members to address each criterion. It should be noted that for many criteria, there is no one "right" way to present information. The level of detail and presentation of information depends on a number of factors including: the type of organization, the size and scope of the website, and the resources available to develop and maintain the website.

**Additional help**

If you have questions regarding the criteria or need additional clarification specific to your website, please contact the VSN representative who is conducting your evaluation/re-evaluation, or send your query to gvsi@who.int
About the screening criteria

As part of the preliminary assessment process, WHO applies a set of screening criteria to all candidate websites. If the candidate website meets the screening criteria then WHO will proceed with the formal evaluation of the site.

- The inclusion criteria are the most basic elements required for a website to qualify to join the VSN.
- The exclusion criteria describe sites that are not eligible to join the VSN.

i. Inclusion criteria

The website:

1. Should have a public health focus.
2. May require member registration, but registration and information should be free of charge.
3. Contains information on vaccine safety and/or information on the safety of vaccines mentioned on the site.
5. Provides balanced\(^1\) information on vaccine safety issues.
6. Should be professional: at a minimum, it should be clearly written and structured, and follow a logical hierarchy for ease of navigation.

ii. Exclusion criteria

The following websites are not eligible to join the VSN:

7. Corporate websites.
8. Websites that are not reviewed regularly, e.g. no activity for 2+ years despite availability of new information.

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\(^1\) VSN defines balanced in the context of these criteria, as unbiased information that presents all reasonable sides of controversial issues in a fair way.
The VSN evaluation team uses the formal assessment criteria to evaluate candidate websites and to re-evaluate existing VSN member websites. There are a total of 34 formal assessment criteria divided into three broad categories. Each category is designated as mandatory or desired. The criteria are grouped as follows:

- credibility (16 mandatory criteria);
- content, quality and quantity (6 mandatory criteria); and
- design and accessibility (12 desired criteria).

Categories

Credibility criteria (mandatory)

Credibility criteria are aimed at ensuring transparency regarding basic elements, including:

- purpose of the website
- who owns and manages the website
- financial sponsorship of the website
- how website owners protect private or semi-private information such as e-mail addresses and telephone numbers

These elements can help website visitors make an informed decision regarding whether this is a trustworthy resource that they wish to consult to learn about issues related to vaccine safety.

Content, quality and quantity criteria (mandatory)

The criteria in this category are aimed at ensuring that the website content is accurate, current and reliable. Critical factors assessed include:

- source of information, including any potential conflicts of interest the authors may have related to the content;
- how site content is selected and reviewed, and by whom;
- when the content was last reviewed and updated; and
- whether all reasonable sides of issues are presented in a fair way.

Transparency with regard to these critical factors contributes to the credibility of the website and helps to inspire confidence among website visitors.

Design and accessibility criteria (desired)

These criteria seek to ensure that the website is as user-friendly, and accessible as possible. The criteria cover a broad range of issues including:

- website design, including colour, font and graphics;
- website structure, including availability of tools that aid in navigation such as site maps and internal search engines;
- quality of hyperlinks;
- ease of disseminating information via social media channels

Mandatory or desired

WHO designates each criterion as either mandatory or desired: 22 of the criteria are classified as mandatory and 12 criteria are classified as desirable.

- Mandatory criteria are considered critical and compliance is required for a website to obtain or maintain VSN membership.
- Desired criteria relate to elements that help to enhance a website but are not mandatory for a website to obtain or maintain VSN membership.
1 Mission of site

1.1 Purpose of the website stated

Notes: Users should be able to easily find information on the purpose of the website. This information need not be included on the homepage of the site.

Example A: PATH’s Vaccine Resource Library
URL: http://www.path.org/vaccineresources/about.php

Example B: The Immunisation Advisory Centre
URL: http://www.immune.org.nz/
1.2 Intended audience defined

Notes: Users should be able to easily find information on the intended audience(s) of the website. This information need not be included on the homepage of the site.

Example A: Vaccines Today
URL: http://www.vaccinestoday.eu/about/

Example B: HSE National Immunisation Office Website, Ireland
URL: http://www.hse.ie/eng/health/immunisation/
1.3 If the website provides a mission statement, the content of the website matches the statement

Notes: The VSN evaluators will review the website and determine if the website content adequately matches the mission statement.

Example A: The History of Vaccines - La Historia de las Vacunas
URL: http://www.historyofvaccines.org/content/about

Example B: HSE National Immunisation Office Website, Ireland
URL: http://www.hse.ie/eng/health/immunisation/whoweare/
2 Disclosure of ownership/source

2.1 Organization name and/or logo appear on every page.

2.2 Contact information (mailing address and/or email address) should be provided, but need not be posted on every page.

2.3 Every page should link to the contact page or the home page.

Example A: The Immunisation Advisory Centre
URL: http://www.immune.org.nz/contact-us

Example B: Immunization Action Coalition
URL: http://www.immunize.org/clinic/
2.4 Qualifications of organization or individual website owner should be obvious, including type of organization, e.g. government, non-profit, academic.

2.5 The website should disclose individual’s affiliations and alliances and disclose any relationship that might influence the content of the site.

Example A: Vaccines Today
URL: http://www.vaccinestoday.eu/about/

Notes: Websites that are directly owned and managed by corporations are not eligible for VSN membership; however, websites that are owned and managed by a third party or consortium and have corporate funding may be eligible for VSN membership provided that they maintain editorial independence.
Example B: The History of Vaccines - La Historia de las Vacunas
URL: http://www.historyofvaccines.org/content/about
2.6 Websites should list the name and affiliation of each member of the Editorial Board, Advisory Board, or Board of Directors. If an organization does not have a board, they should at least include information regarding the site content policy and/or editorial policy.

Example A: The Immunisation Advisory Centre
URL: http://www.immune.org.nz/content-review

Example B: Vaccine Education Center at the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia
URL: http://www.chop.edu/centers-programs/vaccine-education-center/our-team
Example C: The History of Vaccines - La Historia de las Vacunas
URL: http://www.historyofvaccines.org/content/about

Editorial Advisory Board
Andreas Rollmann, MD, PhD, FAAP
Attending Physician, Pediatric Associates, Inc.

Esther Chernak, MD, MPH
Medical Specialist, Ambulatory Health Services, Philadelphia Department of Public Health; Associate Professor, Drexel University School of Public Health

Thomas Fekete, MD
Section Chief, Infectious Diseases; Professor, Medicine; Associate Professor, Microbiology and Immunology; School of Medicine, Temple University

Hilary Koprowski, MD (dec.)
Professor Laureate, The Wistar Institute; Professor, Department of Cancer Biology, Thomas Jefferson University

Meryle J. Melnicoff, PhD
Director, Business Development, The Wistar Institute (retired)

Paul A. Offit, MD
Chief, Section of Infectious Diseases; Director, Vaccine Education Center; The Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia

Carla M. Owens, MA, LPC
Parent Advisory Board, Voices for Vaccines

Stanley A. Plotkin, MD
Emeritus Professor of Pediatrics, University of Pennsylvania; Emeritus Professor, The Wistar Institute

Lisa Rosner, PhD
Professor of History, Stockton College

George M. Wohrech, MD
Director and CEO, The College of Physicians of Philadelphia

Michael Yudell, PhD, MPH
Associate Professor, Department of Community Health and Prevention, Drexel University School of Public Health
3 Transparency of sponsorship

3.1 Websites should use one or more of the methods listed below to describe the manner in which they address the issue of sponsorship or funding.

3.1.1 Disclosure of all sources of funding for organization/website or funding of persons involved in the development and review of web content. Describe the role of the funding source.

3.1.2 Disclosure of any relevant personal or financial associations that might be considered a potential conflict of interest.

3.1.3 If advertising is a source of funding, this should be clearly stated and a brief description of the owner’s advertising policy should be included.

Example A: Viral Hepatitis Prevention Board
URL: http://www.vhpb.org/supports-and-grants

Example B: The Immunisation Advisory Centre
URL: http://www.immune.org.nz/funding
3.2 If the website includes third-party content and/or advertising, the website should indicate whether it has control over this material. The website should also include a disclaimer stating that displaying this extra content does not imply endorsement. If advertising space is sold, the website should specify how it uses funds from these marketing activities.

Notes: A screenshot is provided for your reference but due to size limitations of this document, please visit the URL provided below to view the full example.

Example A: WebMD (Note: WebMD is not a VSN member website)

URL: http://www.webmd.com/about-webmd-policies/about-advertising-policy

URL: http://www.webmd.com/about-webmd-policies/about-our-sponsors?ss=ftr
3.3 If ad space is sold, the website should specify how it uses funds from these marketing activities.

3.4 The website may sell materials if they align with the website`s content. Content intended to promote or sell products or services should be clearly distinguished from the educational and scientific content.

Example A: **Caring for Kids, Canadian Paediatric Society**
URL: [https://bookstore.cps.ca/](https://bookstore.cps.ca/)

Example B: **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, CDC, National Center for Emerging and Zoonotic Infectious Diseases, Division of Healthcare Quality Promotion**
4 Accountability to users

4.1 Users should be able to contact the owner of the website to report any technical issues, such as broken links, or to provide feedback. Multiple methods of contacting the owner of the website (e-mail address, electronic form, postal address) should be provided, but need not be posted on every page.

4.2 This information should be easily accessible from any page of the site, e.g. include link to the contact information in the footer or menu bar of every page or link back to the homepage.

Example A: Caring for Kids, Canadian Paediatric Society
URL: http://www.caringforkids.cps.ca/resources/contact_us

Example B: Public Health Agency of Canada
URL: http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/contac-eng.php
4.3 Owner or representative should respond to user feedback in a timely and appropriate manner.

4.4 Number of business days for answering test question.
Notes: Website owners should strive to respond to user feedback within five business days. If this is not possible, websites should, at a minimum, provide auto confirmation that the message has been received.

Example A: Public Health Agency of Canada

Example B: Vaccines Today
URL: http://www.vaccinestoday.eu/about/contact-us/
4.5 Websites offering interactive exchanges (e.g., chat room, ‘medical’ or similar advice in response to questions/comments) should disclose information about the moderator or clinician's expertise and affiliations.

4.6 Websites should disclose how comments will be moderated.

Example A: **The Immunization Action Coalition**
Example B: NHS Choices - Immunisation Information
URL: http://www.nhs.uk/aboutNHSChoices/aboutnhschoices/termsandconditions/Pages/commentspolicy.aspx
5 Data protection and privacy

5.1 Websites should display a privacy statement or confidentiality policy that describes how the organization treats private or semi-private information such as e-mail addresses and telephone numbers if collected. Sites should not collect, use, or share personal data without the user's specific affirmative consent. Users should be informed of use of cookies and any use of data they provide.

Example A: The Immunisation Advisory Centre
URL: http://www.immune.org.nz/privacy-policy

Example B: Public Health Agency of Canada
URL: http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/im-ai-eng.php#a2
5.2 Websites should take reasonable steps to protect personal data (if collected) from unauthorized access.

Notes: These measures can include setting up firewalls to prevent unauthorized access to servers, and restricting access of users’ private information to website employees.

Example A: Caring for Kids, Canadian Paediatric Society
URL: http://www.cps.ca/en/policies-politiques/privacy
Example B: Immunize Canada

If you provide us with personal information, it will be used only to respond to your message, or establish general patterns of site usage. Only those employees who need the information to reply to your request or compile survey results will have access to the information you provide. No attempt will be made to link personal information with individual respondents.

Immunize Canada employs software programs to protect the site from unauthorized attempts to upload or change information or otherwise damage the site. This software records the Internet Protocol (IP) address of the computer that has contacted our website. An IP address is a unique Internet “address” assigned to all Web users by their Internet Service Providers (ISP). Immunize Canada does not attempt to link these addresses with the identity of the user unless an attempt to damage the site has been detected.

Example C: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, CDC, National Center for Emerging and Zoonotic Infectious Diseases, Division of Healthcare Quality Promotion
URL: http://www.cdc.gov/other/privacy.html

CDC does not disclose, share, sell, or transfer any information about CDC digital media visitors or users unless required by law enforcement or by statute.

For site security purposes and to ensure that this service remains available to all users, CDC employs software programs to identify unauthorized attempts to upload or change information, or otherwise cause damage.

CDC’s digital media are maintained by the U.S. Government and is protected by various provisions of Title 18, U.S. Code. Violations of Title 18 are subject to criminal prosecution in Federal court.

Within the CDC, we restrict access to personally identifiable information to employees, contractors, and vendors subject to non-disclosure requirements who require access to this information in order to perform their official duties and exercise controls to limit what data they can view based on the specific needs of their position. If you choose to share information with us, we may in some cases, share that information or automatically generated information with other government agencies in response to lawful law enforcement requests or to protect CDC.gov from security threats.

We do not use or share your information for commercial purposes and, except as described above, we do not exchange or otherwise disclose this information.
6 Responsible partnering

6.1 VSN members are encouraged to partner with or link to other websites with the same high standards.

Example A: Viral Hepatitis Prevention Board
URL: http://www.vhpb.org/immunisation-vaccination

Example B: Vaccine Education Center at the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia
URL: http://www.chop.edu/centers-programs/vaccine-education-center/resources/vaccine-websites#.V0bTX01JmUk
6.2 Websites should indicate when users are leaving the home site by using an external link icon, a disclaimer statement, or by opening a new window.

Example A: Asociacion Espanola de Pediatra – Comite asesor de vacunas
http://vacunasaep.org/familias/contraindicaciones-de-las-vacunas

Example B: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, CDC, National Center for Emerging and Zoonotic Infectious Diseases, Division of Healthcare Quality Promotion
URL: http://www.cdc.gov/Features/VaccineSafety/
Example C: PATH's Vaccine Resource Library
URL: http://www.path.org/vaccineresources/details.php?i=1167

Addressing the Vaccine Confidence Gap

This article, published in The Lancet, discusses some of the characteristics of the changing global environment that are contributing to increased public questioning of vaccines, and outlines some of the specific determinants of public trust. The authors claim that public decision making related to vaccine acceptance is neither driven by scientific nor economic evidence alone, but is also driven by a mix of psychological, sociocultural, and political factors, all of which need to be understood and taken into account by policy and other decision makers.

Author: Larson HJ, Cooper LZ, Eskola J, Katz SL, Ratzan S
Published: 2011

Visit web page (English)
(Location at www.thelancet.com)
7 Content, quality and quantity

7.1 Websites should provide a clear statement of the source for scientific, medical and health information, including author's name, affiliations and any potential conflicts of interest the authors may have related to the content.

Notes: Information should be supported by citations to source materials with hypertext links, if available. The information presented should be based on objective scientific research. The website should identify the evidence that supports a position, including references to published studies and reference works. Citations to source materials are not necessary for well-known or background information.

Example A: Vaccine Education Center at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia
URL: http://www.chop.edu/centers-programs/vaccine-education-center/vaccines-and-other-conditions/vaccines-asthma-allergies

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References


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Example B: The History of Vaccines - La Historia de las Vacunas
URL: http://www.historyofvaccines.org/content/articles/vaccine-development-testing-and-regulation

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Sources


Table above from The Children's Vaccine Initiative: Achieving the Vision. National Academies Press.


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7.2 The date of last review or update should be clearly indicated on each webpage. The website should be updated as new information becomes available.

Example A: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, CDC, National Center for Emerging and Zoonotic Infectious Diseases, Division of Healthcare Quality Promotion (see page footer)
URL: http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd-vac/pneumo/default.htm

Example B: Vaccine Education Center at the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia (see page footer)
URL: http://vec.chop.edu/service/vaccine-education-center/a-look-at-each-vaccine/hepatitis-b-vaccine.html
7.3 The website should include a statement of the procedure used for selection of site content, including a guarantee of the independence of the editorial process, the names and affiliations of the Editorial Board, and any review process.

Notes: Briefly describe the review process and frequency of review.

Example A: Immunisation Scotland (of the NHS in Scotland)
URL: http://www.immunisationscotland.org.uk/about-this-website/index.aspx

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**Editorial group**
The Immunisation Scotland website is managed by NHS Health Scotland. The information on the website is evidence-based, developed and approved by an editorial group consisting of immunisation specialists, who are listed below.

**Scottish Government**
Gareth Brown (Health Protection Team)
Rona Watters (Health Protection Team)

**Health Protection Scotland**
Dr Martin Donaghy (HPS Medical Director)

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Much of the content on the site was initially developed by Health Protection Scotland and NHS Health Scotland to provide the public with up-to-date information on the MMR vaccine. The site then expanded to include general information adapted from the publications to cover all vaccines routinely available in Scotland. Information was also adapted from the Department of Health website (external site).

The draft content for the site was reviewed extensively by immunisation specialists in Scotland and the site was pre-tested with the target audience of the public and health professionals to ensure it was informative and easy to understand and navigate before it was approved. NHS Health Scotland staff update the site regularly with advice from members of the editorial group.
Example B: **HSE National Immunisation Office Website, Ireland**

All information on Immunisation is evidence based and reviewed by a panel of immunisation experts from Royal College of Physicians of Ireland National Immunisation Advisory Committee to ensure it is scientifically accurate and is based on the Immunisation Guidelines for Ireland. The information on these pages is monitored and updated by a team of public health doctors who are members of the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland National Immunisation Advisory Committee and staff from the National Immunisation Office.

The site includes a facility to "ask a question". These queries are responded to as quickly as possible and the content of the website is updated if appropriate.

Example C: **Immunization Action Coalition**
URL: [http://www.immunize.org/aboutus/content-review.asp](http://www.immunize.org/aboutus/content-review.asp)

Content Review

Review process for website content and educational materials

The Immunization Action Coalition (IAC) works tirelessly to provide healthcare professionals with the latest immunization information and to create accurate and reliable educational materials for their patients and staff. IAC's website, www.immunize.org, is maintained by IAC staff, who make daily additions and updates to its content. Web pages are reviewed regularly and the majority include the date of last review. As important content (e.g., recommendations from the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices) becomes available, website materials are reviewed and updated. IAC's staff of immunization experts develops content for educational materials and periodicals. Occasionally, expert guest authors provide educational materials for the website. Materials are reviewed regularly and include the date of last review. As important content (e.g., recommendations from the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices) becomes available, website materials are reviewed and updated promptly. Experts at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) review the majority of IAC's educational materials for technical accuracy.

This page was updated on February 16, 2017.
7.4 Writing on the website should be professional, with proper grammar, spelling, and composition. Language should be clear, easy to read, and appropriate for intended users.

Notes: If the content is intended for the general public, medical and scientific terms should be clearly defined in the text or in a companion glossary.

Example: The History of Vaccines - La Historia de las Vacunas (glossary)
URL: http://www.historyofvaccines.org/glossary

Example: Javna Ustanova Dom Zdravlja Kantona Sarajevo
URL: http://www.judzks.ba/Sidemenu/Savjetiinovostiozdravlju/Vakcinacija/Mehanizamdjelovanjavakcina.aspx
7.5 Hypertext links to other resources should be carefully selected and their content accurate, current, and credible.

Example: Immunize Canada

To read more on vaccine safety:

Canadian Paediatric Society. Caring for Kids.


The Vaccine Safety Net is a global network of websites, evaluated by the World Health Organization, that provide reliable information on vaccine safety.
7.6 Websites should promote good immunization practices and include all reasonable sides of controversial issues in a fair way.

Example A: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, CDC, National Center for Emerging and Zoonotic Infectious Diseases, Division of Healthcare Quality Promotion
URL: http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vac-gen/side-effects.htm

Example B: The Immunisation Advisory Centre
URL: http://www.immune.org.nz/making-informed-decision-0
Example C: Caring for Kids, Canadian Paediatric Society
URL: http://www.caringforkids.cps.ca/handouts/immunization_information_on_the_internet

A parent’s guide to immunization information on the Internet

The Internet has a lot of information about vaccines and vaccine-preventable diseases—but there is also misinformation, and some of it can be harmful if used to make health decisions.

Evaluating immunization information on the Internet: What can I believe?
Asking a few key questions can help you decide if you can trust the information you find online. These questions can also help you evaluate other sources of vaccine information such as newspapers, magazines, radio, pamphlets or books.

Example D: Vaccine Education Center at the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia
URL: http://www.chop.edu/centers-programs/vaccine-education-center/vaccine-details/yellow-fever-vaccine

Relative risks and benefits
Do the benefits of the yellow fever vaccine outweigh its risks?

Every year thousands of people in the world catch yellow fever and about one of every five die from the disease. Travelers from the United States to countries where yellow fever occurs can and do get yellow fever, and there are no specific agents to treat it. On the other hand, the yellow fever vaccine does not have serious side effects. Therefore, for those traveling to countries where yellow fever is common, the benefits of the yellow fever vaccine outweigh its risks.

Also, remember that the vaccine is not required for entry to some countries where the disease is common. The decision to get the vaccine should be based on whether you are
8 Design and Accessibility

8.1 The website should be consistently available.
Notes: The website should be consistently available and not frequently inaccessible due to server unreliability, high demand, or other problems.

8.2 Consider using responsive web design to allow for adaptability to mobile devices and other technologies.
Notes: One way of assessing this criterion is to determine whether the website is readable from a mobile phone or other handheld device.
8.3 A streaming format for audio and video files, ideally embedded in the page, is recommended.

Example A: Vaccines Today
URL: http://www.vaccinestoday.eu/videos/

Example B: The Immunisation Advisory Centre
URL: http://www.immune.org.nz/resources/videos
8.4 The website should look professional and pleasing and should keep in mind the special accessibility issues of many potential users, such as the visually impaired.

a. The design of the site should be consistent in terms of the use of logos, icons, colour, and fonts.

b. The site should not have large and unnecessary graphics.

c. Text font, size, and colour should be readable and standard throughout the website.

Example A: Immunise Australia Program
8.5 If content is available as a PDF ("camera-ready") or other document type, the website should include information on how to download the file and instructions (and a link) for obtaining the necessary software to do so.

Example A: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), National Center for Emerging and Zoonotic Infectious Diseases, Division of Healthcare Quality Promotion URL: http://www.cdc.gov/Other/plugins/

Example C: **Immunize Canada**  


The [Vaccine Safety Net](http://immunize.ca/en/vaccine-safety.aspx) is a global network of websites, evaluated by the World Health Organization, that provide reliable information on vaccine safety.
8.6 When files are available for download, the file size should be displayed.

Example A: Murcia Salud
URL: http://www.murciasalud.es/pagina.php?id=31274&idsec=828

Example B: National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance of Vaccine Preventable Diseases (NCIRS)

- Presentation – What's new: presentation slides only [PDF – 1.2MB]

You will require Adobe Acrobat Reader to access this file.
8.7 Print-friendly buttons should be used on each page so that information can easily be printed. The website should be readable without the need to download too much content.

Example A: Public Health Agency of Canada

Example B: WHO Global Advisory Committee on Vaccine Safety
URL: http://www.who.int/vaccine_safety/initiative/communication/network/_gacvs/en/
8.8 'Share' buttons should be included to encourage readers to disseminate content via social media channels (Facebook, Twitter, Email, YouTube etc.)
8.9  Websites should allow users to easily access the homepage from any of its pages. The back button should be functional and/or each page should have a link back to the homepage.

Example A: **Immunization Action Coalition** (functional back button and Home link in both header and footer)
URL: [http://www.immunize.org/vaccines/](http://www.immunize.org/vaccines/)

*Note: functional back button and Home link in both header and footer*

Example B: **Childhood Immunization Support Program (CISP), American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)**
8.10 Links should be checked regularly to ensure that users are directed to the site or page they expect to visit. Any broken links should be fixed.

Notes: The website owner should check links and label them appropriately to ensure that users are directed to the intended site. The website owner should check links at least every six months to make sure they are active and pointing to the correct site or page.
8.11 Website should be structured and follow a logical hierarchy for ease of navigation.

8.12 The site should offer aids to finding information, such as a site map, internal search engine, or index.

Example A: **Immunize Canada** (Site map and internal search engine)

Example B: **Childhood Immunization Support Program (CISP), American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)**
URL: [https://www.aap.org/en-us/Pages/Help.aspx](https://www.aap.org/en-us/Pages/Help.aspx)
8.13 Most materials should be available for use in the public domain, with only limited content copyrighted, e.g. materials that require purchase. Information on the legality of further use or distribution of materials, e.g. use of creative commons license, should be clearly indicated.

Example A: The History of Vaccines - La Historia de las Vacunas
URL: http://www.historyofvaccines.org/content/legal-and-privacy

Example B: Immunize Canada
Appendix A: VSN flowchart

This flowchart describes the VSN evaluation and re-evaluation processes.
Appendix B: VSN visual identity

About the VSN visual identity
The purpose of the VSN visual identity is to signal to visitors to member websites that the website meets the Vaccine Safety Net criteria, and to promote the VSN project.

Use of the VSN visual identity
The visual identity is solely owned by the World Health Organization, and can only be used by organizations whose websites have been validated by WHO as meeting the Vaccine Safety Net criteria, and may only be used pursuant to the terms and requirements of this Visual Identity Guideline and the VSN Terms of Reference³.

The visual identity may only be used by VSN members in connection with their VSN activities, i.e. the display on their VSN-approved website. It is ONLY to be used on the related website and it should not be used for activities that are not related, for example: on business cards, letterheads, or for activities relating to the promotion of products and services. The VSN visual identity is not to be used on social media channels.
The VSN visual identity and the WHO

While the VSN is a network established and coordinated by the World Health Organization, an organization’s membership and participation in the VSN does not imply an affiliation with or endorsement of that Organization by WHO beyond a recognition by WHO that its website meets certain agreed criteria. Organizations with websites which are part of the VSN members agree not to imply such an affiliation or endorsement, or to use the name or emblem of the World Health Organization without prior written approval from WHO.

VSN members should inform WHO if their website has been updated which may impact on website’s continuous compliance with the criteria for good information practices.
VSN members can request assistance to integrating the VSN banner on their website by contacting the VSN IT/communication focal point: vaccinesafetynet@gmail.com

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