Study of Childhood Immunizations in Washington State Russian-speaking Populations
Identifying the Problem

Healthcare Effectiveness Data and Information Set

• Collected from 7 major health plans
• Captures the immunization status of infants and children (birth to two years) and the primary language spoken by the parents

Disparity found: Russian-speaking communities in Washington have the lowest childhood immunization rates of any population.
Formative Research

Assessing the priority population

Secondary research
• Literature review – Studies of our audience and similar ones

Primary research
• Key informant interviews – People who know our audience
• Parent focus groups – Directly from our audience
Literature Review

- Reviewed journal articles and other studies
  - Assessed recent Russian-speaking U.S. immigrants and people in Russian-speaking countries
- Used portion of PRECEED-PROCEDE to map contributing factors
- Used findings to help inform primary research and identify overall themes
Literature Review

Key findings (factors to non-vaccination)

- Misperceptions (Beliefs)
- Unsupportive media, websites, and doctors (Reinforcing influential sources)
- Government vaccination policies in countries of origin (Policy)
- Lack of available vaccines (Availability of resources)
- Mistrust of healthcare (Attitudes)
- Hard to understand U.S. healthcare system (access to information in Russian)
- Recommendations varied
Key Informant Interviews

- Interviewed 12 key informants
- Key informants represented various organizations and institutions (religious, academic, public health, clinical, and cultural)
- Assessed social life, culture, health beliefs, and focus group logistics
Key Informant Interviews

Key findings

- Russian-speaking communities are diverse
- Internet fuels mistrust, fear, and vaccine safety concerns
- Use “Russian-speaking” not “Russian”
- Language is a “somewhat” to “significant” barrier
- Russian-speaking communities are tight-knit
- Churches are central to many communities
- Russian-language media effective for reaching the priority population
Focus Groups

Facilitator and note-taker training
- Columbia Language Service
- Explain purpose, tips for success, moderator guide, and answer questions

Securing locations
- Visited recommended venues for environmental scans
Focus Groups

Recruiting parents
- Marketed focus groups multiple ways
- Screened for eligibility criteria

End result
- Four focus groups (Vancouver, Renton, two in Spokane)
- 36 participants (average 9 per focus group)
- 33 women and three men (parents of 114 children)
Focus Groups

Key findings

- Social networks main way vaccine info is shared
- Strong dissatisfaction with healthcare providers
- Parents want specifics on vaccine safety and relative risk
- Decisions made vaccine by vaccine
- Desire for community presentation
- Hear negative info and rumors about safety
- Feel uninformed, uncertain, and fearful of hurting their baby
- Think immunizations should be a choice, schedule starts too early, and don’t like more than one vaccine per visit
Focus Groups

More key findings
- Language and culture affect access and communication
- Parents keep infants at home for protection
- Doctors listening and explaining deeply affects attitude
- If infants are sick, reluctant to vaccinate
- Home remedies in absence of healthcare
- Past experiences affect choices and conditions
- Anti-government feelings not a huge issue
Summary of recommendations

• Improving doctor-patient relationships may be most impactful
  • Empathy, explain details, choice, avoid being pushy, listen
  • Cultural competency tools for providers
• Provide resources to patient advocates in the community
• Community presentations
• Russian-language capacity on Child Profile e-mail newsletters
• Handout with best web resources in English and Russian
Summary of recommendations (continued)

- Printed materials in Russian to complement provider discussion
- Materials should address major questions and concerns:
  - Risk of the vaccine vs. seriousness of illness
  - Info on vaccine ingredients and diseases vaccines prevent
  - Safety, side effects, and effectiveness
  - Why vaccines are for infants
  - How they affect the immune system
  - Combinations and multiple doses
- “Plain Talk About Childhood Immunizations”