

## **IMMUNIZATION INFORMATION FOR COLORADO PARENTS**

### **DID YOU KNOW?**

Parents consider a variety of factors when choosing a school or child care center, and now immunization and vaccine exemption rates can be part of that decision making process. Colorado parents can compare immunization rates when choosing a school or licensed child care facility for their child. A recent law, House Bill 1288, that went into effect July 1, 2014, requires all schools and licensed child care facilities to disclose their immunization and vaccine exemption rates on request. That means that anyone – including parents – can simply call and ask for the facility-wide rates.

### **WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?**

School communities with higher vaccine exemption or opt out rates are more likely to experience an outbreak of vaccine preventable diseases (VPD). A VPD outbreak puts all children – including vaccinated children – at a higher risk of contracting such diseases. Knowing the school or licensed child care facility immunization rate is especially important for the parent of a child whose immune system is compromised, too young to be vaccinated, or is medically fragile.

### **WHY SHOULD I CARE ABOUT IMMUNIZATION RATES IF MY CHILD IS ALREADY VACCINATED?**

No vaccine is 100% effective, 100% of the time. Vaccines work very well, but there are some people who don't develop immunity when they are vaccinated, and sometimes the effects of vaccines fade over time. Even though vaccinated children are much less likely to catch a VPD like pertussis or measles, they are still at risk if exposed. So, the protection vaccines provide makes them very worthwhile for the individual child and the child's contacts.

### **HOW DO I KNOW IF A FACILITY'S IMMUNIZATION RATE IS HIGH ENOUGH?**

When enough people in a community are vaccinated against a disease, those who are vaccinated can provide a shield of protection for those who cannot be vaccinated. This shield helps reduce the likelihood that a VPD will enter a community and spread to at-risk members of that community. Pregnant women, babies, children and adults with weakened immune systems, children with certain allergies, and the elderly all rely on vaccinated members of their communities to shield them from serious and potentially life-threatening illnesses. This phenomenal shield is known as community immunity. For each disease a particular percentage of the population must be vaccinated in order to keep it at bay.

Disease	Minimum Threshold for Community Immunity	Average Colorado Immunization Rate*	Your Child Care/School Immunization Rate
Measles	95%	86.0%	
Mumps	86%	86.0%	
Pertussis	94%	81.2%	
Polio	95%	90.3%	
Chickenpox (Varicella)	90%	84.8%	

\*2013 National Immunization Survey

## THE HARM OF SKIPPING OR DELAYING VACCINATIONS

We live in an increasingly global world, with increased risks around every corner. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports outbreaks around the world and provides health information for travel to more than 200 international destinations. (cdc.gov) Diseases such as mumps, pertussis, measles, and polio, once thought to be nearly eradicated, are coming back because vaccine rates have decreased in some locations.

## SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF NOT GETTING VACCINATED

There are also social implications of not vaccinating a child – from exclusion to quarantine. If a child is sick or exposed to a VPD, that child may need to be isolated from others, including family. If there is an outbreak in your community and a child has not been immunized, that child will likely have to be taken out of school and other organized activities, causing the child to miss school and special events.

## WHERE CAN I GO IF I HAVE MORE QUESTIONS?

- For questions about HB 1288 and school/child care vaccine requirements, please contact the Colorado Department of Health and Environment at [cdphe.dcdimmunization@state.co.us](mailto:cdphe.dcdimmunization@state.co.us)
- For more information about vaccines, vaccine safety, and the vaccine schedule, visit [www.ImmunizeforGood.com](http://www.ImmunizeforGood.com)

## RESOURCES TO CONTACT & ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

American Academy of Pediatrics (<http://www.aap.org/immunization/>)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines>)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (<http://www.cdc.gov/measles/>)

Institute of Medicine – Vaccinate Your Baby

(<http://www.vaccinateyourbaby.org/safe/ion/index.cfm>)

U. S. National Library of Medicine, National Institutes of Health

(<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/childhoodimmunization.html>)

Chalkbeat Colorado (<http://co.chalkbeat.org/2015/02/11/immunization-rates-a-shock-to-some-parents-predictable-to-public-health-experts/#.VOWC2HZf0bs>)



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