

Protecting Children in Michigan from Disease

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When the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released the 2015 National Immunization Survey (NIS) data last year, Michigan was ranked 44th in the nation for pediatric immunization coverage. Only 67.6 percent of Michigan children aged 19-35 months-old are fully immunized with the 4313314 series, compared to 72.2 percent nationally.¹ While this represents a modest improvement from the previous year (ranked 47th in the nation with 65.0 percent series coverage), it is unacceptable that 32.4 percent of our young children are not protected from vaccine preventable diseases.

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) and immunization advocates from the public and private sectors are focusing on a number of initiatives to increase the state's immunization rates. These include new media campaigns targeting parents, using the Michigan Care Improvement Registry (MCIR) to remind parents their child is overdue for vaccinations, and creating new immunization educational materials.

The MDHHS Division of Immunization recently partnered with the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program to encourage WIC mothers to get their children vaccinated. A media campaign ran from November 2016 to February 2017 targeting specific geographic areas in Michigan. The campaign included radio public service announcements (PSAs), digital advertisements, bus ads, and an immunization message on Dollar General and Family Dollar receipts.

Another media campaign, IVaccinate, launched in 2017 to target messages to parents who are vaccine-hesitant. The IVaccinate campaign is a collaborative effort between the Franny Strong Foundation and MDHHS. This is a statewide media campaign with a heightened focus on selected areas of the state with high immunization waiver rates. IVaccinate includes television and radio PSAs, social media, print ads in parent magazines, and billboards. Later this year, the campaign will also launch its own website.

In April 2016, MDHHS began sending immunization reminder letters statewide to parents and guardians of children aged 6-18 months who were overdue for any recommended immunization, including flu vaccine. More than 68,000 letters were sent during the first three rounds (April-December 2016). A fourth round of reminder letters will be sent in March 2017.

¹ The combined 7-vaccine series (4:3:1:3:3:1:4) includes ≥4 doses of DTaP, ≥3 doses of Polio, ≥1 dose of measles-containing vaccine, Hib full series, ≥3 HepB, ≥1 Var, and ≥4 PCV.

The Division of Immunization continues to create new educational materials and posters to promote immunizations and educate parents about why vaccines are so important for their children and why they should be administered following the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices' (ACIP) schedule. Along with providing vaccine education, our goal is to assure vaccine-hesitant parents that despite what they may see on social media, over 90 percent of parents in the U.S. immunize their children.²

MDHHS is asking all immunizing healthcare providers in Michigan to focus on getting children vaccinated with all the recommended vaccines, following the recommended schedule. Use MCIR to review your patients' immunization status at every visit and assess which immunizations are needed. Vaccinate with all ACIP-recommended vaccines and according to the ACIP schedule. ACIP determines when and at what intervals vaccines should be administered based on when the immune system best responds to the vaccine. We need to protect children as early as we can within the recommended age indications so they are not left vulnerable to diseases. The 2017 Childhood Immunization schedule, to be released in February, will be posted at www.cdc.gov/vaccines.

National Infant Immunization Week (NIIW) is an annual observance to highlight the importance of protecting infants from vaccine-preventable diseases. This year, NIIW is April 22-29. To learn more about NIIW, visit www.cdc.gov/vaccines/events/niiw/index.html. Use NIIW within your practice to kick off pediatric immunization efforts. Use MCIR profile reports to determine what areas in your practice you need to work on (e.g., influenza, hepatitis A), and set attainable goals to work towards. Healthcare providers are recommended to meet the Standards for Pediatric Immunization Practice (www.hhs.gov/nvpo/nvac/reports-and-recommendations/the-standards-for-pediatric-immunization-practice/index.html).

If your office staff needs a refresher on pediatric immunizations, MDHHS offers infant and early childhood immunization modules. For more about these programs or to request an in-service, visit www.michigan.gov/immunize, click on Health Care Professionals/Providers, and look under Provider Education Resources for *Immunization Education Opportunities for Health Care Personnel*.

Make sure you and your staff are doing everything you can to immunize Michigan children on time, get children who have fallen behind on vaccines caught back up, and follow the ACIP schedule. Parents who bring their children to your office are putting their trust in you. Protect their children by giving them all the recommended vaccines at the recommended ages. Explain to parents why vaccines are recommended at the ages and intervals they are – to provide the best possible protection to their child.

² Kennedy, A., Basket, M., & Sheedy, K. (2011). Vaccine attitudes, concerns, and information sources reported by parents of young children: Results from the 2009 HealthStyles survey. *Pediatrics*, 127(Supplement 1), S92-S99. doi:10.1542/peds.2010-1722N