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To: Principals of Public Schools  
Principals of Private Schools

From: Russell D. Johnston, Acting Commissioner  
Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Pejman Talebian, MA, MPH, Director  
Immunization Division, Department of Public Health

Re: 2024-2025 Grade 7 Immunization Survey

Date: September 2024

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The annual public and private school **Grade 7 Immunization Survey** is conducted by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) Immunization Division. The purpose of this survey is to identify children entering seventh grade who are not protected against vaccine-preventable diseases and to ensure that they are properly immunized according to state requirements. These data are publicly available on the [Immunization Division website](http://www.mass.gov/dph/imm).

### **School Immunization Requirements**

The following immunizations are required for students entering grades 7 through 10:

- 2 doses of MMR vaccine
- 3 doses of hepatitis B vaccine
- 2 doses of varicella (chickenpox) vaccine or physician-certified history of chickenpox disease
- 4 doses of polio vaccine
- 1 dose of Tdap vaccine (following complete DTaP series)
- 1 dose of MenACWY vaccine

### **Recommended Vaccines**

- 1 dose of influenza vaccine for the current influenza season
- 1 dose of updated COVID-19 vaccine
- 2 or 3 doses of HPV vaccine (depending on the age the vaccine series was started)

For additional details, see the MDPH [2024-2025 School Immunization Requirements](#) document.

### **Adult Staff Guidelines**

There are no immunization requirements for teachers and other staff. However, MDPH recommends that teachers and staff remain up to date on their vaccinations to avoid possible exclusion from school during an outbreak of a vaccine-preventable disease. The document titled [Adult Occupational Immunizations: Massachusetts Recommendations and Requirements](#) outlines the vaccine recommendations for adults.

### **Every Student Succeeds Act**

Please note that unimmunized or partially immunized homeless children and children in foster care cannot be denied entry to public schools if they do not have immunization records. The federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) states that if a child or youth who is homeless or in foster care arrives lacking immunizations or medical records, the parent/guardian should be referred to the district's [homeless education liaison](#)/foster care point of contact. This individual is responsible for obtaining relevant academic records and immunizations or medical records and for ensuring that students who are homeless or in foster care are attending school while the records are obtained. The student must be enrolled and permitted to attend public school in the interim. If you have any questions about the Every Student Succeeds Act, please contact the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) at (781) 338-3700 or [compliance@doe.mass.edu](mailto:compliance@doe.mass.edu).

### **Before- and After-school Programs**

Before- and after-school programs are not expected to complete the immunization survey if immunization records are on file at each child's school. If your program falls into this category, please disregard the survey invitation and contact the MDPH Immunization Data Assessment Unit at [ImmAssessmentUnit@mass.gov](mailto:ImmAssessmentUnit@mass.gov) to remove your program from our contact list. Although you do not need to complete the survey, you are still responsible for ensuring the immunization records are on file at each child's school.

### **Massachusetts Immunization Information System (MIIS) and Survey Deadline**

School nurses are encouraged to use the MIIS to search student immunization records (if needed) while completing the school survey. The survey itself is conducted only through the MIIS. School administrators must register their schools/districts to obtain access to the MIIS. Further information regarding the MIIS can be found on the [MIIS Resource Center website](#).

The Grade 7 Immunization Survey is due by Friday, January 24, 2025. In previous years, influenza vaccination information was collected in a second section – the “flu survey” – of the standard immunization survey. This section has been discontinued, and influenza data will not be collected this year.

Please report the number of students with medical and religious exemptions to each vaccine on the survey. This helps us determine patterns in exemptions that could potentially lead to disease outbreaks and develop appropriate educational materials. We also ask you to report the total number of students with any exemptions and the number of students with an exemption who have no documented vaccines (who are unimmunized).

### **Meningococcal Vaccine and Residential Schools**

In addition to the school immunization requirements referenced above, residential schools in Massachusetts are subject to legislation (MGL Ch. 76, s.15D), which requires full-time students in Grades 9-12 to be vaccinated with MenACWY if they will be living in a dormitory or other congregate housing licensed by the school. The requirement also applies to residential students in Grades Pre-K through 8 if the school combines these grades in the same school with students in Grades 9-12. Residential students must provide documentation of having received a dose of MenACWY unless they qualify for a medical or religious exemption (Meningococcal B vaccines are not required and do not fulfill this requirement).

These residential students must be given the document entitled Information about Meningococcal Disease, Meningococcal Vaccines, Vaccination Requirements and the Waiver for Students at Colleges and Residential Schools found on the [mass.gov website](https://www.mass.gov/webpage). Guardians of students under age 18 may choose to sign this document, which waives the requirement after learning about the risks and benefits of the vaccine.

### **Immunization Survey Results**

In 2023-2024, the immunization records of 71,277 seventh-grade students from 962 schools were reviewed. Immunization rates by school for schools reporting 30 or more children are available on the [Immunization Division webpage](https://www.mass.gov/webpage).

### **Results from the Immunization Survey of Students Entering Grade 7**

School Year	No. of Records Reviewed	2 MMR	3 Hep B	Immunity to chickenpox <sup>1</sup>	Tdap	1 MenACWY	Medical Exemptions	Religious Exemptions
2023-24	71,277	97.9%	97.8%	97.5%	93.3%	92.4%	0.16%	1.06%
2022-23	70,709	98.2%	98.1%	97.8%	93.2%	92.4%	0.14%	1.06%
2021-22	69,894	98.1%	97.8%	97.7%	92.4%	91.1%	0.22%	0.98%
2020-21	72,973	98.4%	98.3%	98.1%	91.3%	90.3%	0.23%	1.03%

<sup>1</sup>Immunity to chickenpox disease includes children who have a documented physician-certified reliable history of chickenpox disease or 2 doses of varicella vaccine.

### **Additional Resources and Information**

While the rate of religious exemptions has remained relatively steady in recent years, we encourage schools and programs to review their policies and practices regarding exemptions, including the recommendation to have families renew these annually.

The resources below are available to help improve communication with vaccine-hesitant parents:

- [\*Personal belief exemptions for vaccination put people at risk. Examine the evidence for yourself\*](#)
- [\*What if you don't immunize your child?\*](#)
- [\*Childhood vaccine information for parents and caregivers – a page of resources\*](#)

Massachusetts school immunization requirements have been very effective in preventing the outbreak of vaccine-preventable diseases. Continued enforcement of the immunization requirements is essential to the health of our children.

Your efforts in completing this survey contribute to protecting our children from vaccine-preventable diseases. Please use the [survey worksheets and instructions](#) to help complete the survey accurately. Please retain copies of the survey and worksheets to facilitate follow-up on children and staff not fully immunized. You may be chosen for a randomized audit of immunization records or be called to review your records by MDPH Immunization Division staff. If you have any questions, please email the MDPH Data Assessment Unit at [ImmAssessmentUnit@mass.gov](mailto:ImmAssessmentUnit@mass.gov).