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To: Principals of Public Schools
Principals of Private Schools

From: Jeffrey C. Riley, Commissioner
Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

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

Re: 2023-2024 Kindergarten Immunization Survey

Date: September 2023

The annual public and private school **Kindergarten Immunization Survey** is conducted by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) Immunization Division. The purpose of this survey is to identify children entering kindergarten 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.

School Immunization Requirements

The regulations require the following immunizations for students entering kindergarten through grade 6:

- 5 doses of DTaP vaccine
- 4 doses of polio vaccine
- 2 doses of MMR vaccine
- 3 doses of hepatitis B vaccine
- 2 doses of varicella vaccine

Recommended Vaccines

- 1 dose of influenza vaccine for the current influenza season
- 1 dose of updated COVID-19 vaccine

Please see the MDPH document, *Massachusetts School Immunization Requirements 2023-2024* for additional details:

<https://www.mass.gov/doc/immunization-requirements-for-school-entry-0/download>

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** states that if a homeless or foster care child or youth arrives lacking immunizations or medical records, the parent/guardian should be referred to the district's Homeless Education Liaison/foster care point of contact, who has the responsibility to obtain relevant academic records and immunizations or medical records and to ensure that homeless/foster care students 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.

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 here: (<https://www.miisresourcecenter.com/>)

The standard immunization survey for kindergarten is due January 26, 2024. 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 education 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).

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 and is found on our website: (<https://www.mass.gov/doc/adult-occupational-immunizations-massachusetts-recommendations-and-requirements>)

Immunization Survey Results

In 2022-2023, the immunization records of 66,041 kindergarten children from 1,374 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/info-details/school-immunizations>).

Results from the Immunization Survey of Children Entering Kindergarten

School Year	No. of Records Reviewed	5 DTaP	4 Polio	2 MMR	3 Hep B	Immunity to Chickenpox ¹	5-4-2-3-2 Series ²	Medical Exemption	Religious Exemption
2022-23	66,041	96.2%	96.3%	96.5%	97.3%	96.1%	94.5%	0.17%	1.23%
2021-22	65,582	96.1%	96.1%	96.3%	97.0%	95.9%	94.3%	0.18%	0.87%
2020-21	60,724	95.7%	95.6%	95.9%	97.2%	95.5%	93.8%	0.21%	0.93%

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

²5-4-2-3-2 Series: 5 DTaP, 4 polio, 2 MMR, 3 hepatitis B, and 2 varicella.

While the rate of religious exemptions has remained relatively steady in recent years, we encourage schools to review their policies and practices regarding exemptions, including the recommendation to have families renew these annually. The resources below are available to help with communication with parents lacking vaccine confidence:

- *Personal belief exemptions for vaccination put people at risk. Examine the evidence for yourself* - <http://www.immunize.org/catg.d/p2069.pdf>
- *What if you don't immunize your child?* - <http://www.immunize.org/catg.d/p4017.pdf>
- *Childhood vaccine information for parents and caregivers* – a page of resources - <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/childhood-vaccine-information-for-parents-and-caregivers>

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. If needed, use the survey worksheets and instructions to 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 contact the MDPH Data Assessment Unit by email at immassessmentunit@mass.gov.