



September 2019

Greetings from Tri-County Health Department:

I hope you are off to a great start to the school year! I am reaching out to let you know about current efforts across the state to increase vaccination rates in Colorado kindergartners.

Statewide data from the 2018-2019 school year shows that among kindergartners, rates for four of the five school-required vaccines decreased:

- Measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccination rates dropped from 88.7% in 2017-2018 to 87.4%, representing a 1.3% decrease from the 2017-2018 school year in which Colorado ranked as the worst state in the nation.
- Hepatitis B dropped from 92% in 2017-2018 to 90.8%
- Polio dropped from 88.6% in 2017-2018 to 87.2%
- Chickenpox dropped from 87.7% in 2017-2018 to 86.5%

We have gotten Governor Polis' attention, particularly around our low MMR rates. On June 13, 2019, the Governor issued an Executive Order to improve Colorado's kindergarten vaccination rates and directed public health to take immediate action. A goal was set to increase MMR rates from 87.4% to 90% by June 2020 and to keep measles out of Colorado.

**Tri-County Health Department (TCHD) needs the help of every school nurse in Adams, Arapahoe, and Douglas Counties to make this happen!** The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment also just released a broad media campaign to improve vaccination rates called "[Spread The Vax Facts](#)" which addresses vaccine hesitant parents' concerns. We urge you to take part in this effort.

**Here's what you can do to help join us in our fight to keep measles out of Colorado:**

#### **Talk to parents**

We understand the back-to-school rush. It's hectic. But it's also a prime time to encourage parents to locate their child's vaccination records and to give them information about convenient places to get vaccinations.

- Refer parents to their local public health agency or [vaccinefinder.org](http://vaccinefinder.org).
- Here are [talking points](#) for parents.
- Here is a [newsletter template](#) you can use online or in an email.
- Use [www.COVaxRates.org](http://www.COVaxRates.org) to find your school's immunization rates from the 2018-2019 school year if you would like that information to add to a newsletter article.

### **Follow the school immunization law**

Colorado Board of Health Rules require schools to have an up-to-date certificate of immunization, an exemption, or an in-process plan on file for each enrolled student. Students who do not have one of these documents on file are not permitted to attend school and can be excluded.

- The Colorado Children’s Immunization Coalition has district-level information that can help you understand your community’s level of protection, where schools are succeeding, and where schools might improve. Visit [www.COSchoolIZ.org](http://www.COSchoolIZ.org) for more information.
- Report and publicize your MMR vaccination data with parents and the school community.
- Colorado Board of Health rule 6 CCR 1009-2 requires most schools and child care facilities in Colorado to report immunization and exemption data to the state health department annually. Please ensure your schools are reporting their data and look for more information from TCHD about the reporting process.

### **Share facts, not diseases**

In Colorado, we’ve made it easy for parents to get the information they need. We need your help in getting these tools into the hands of Colorado parents.

- [www.COVaxRecords.org](http://www.COVaxRecords.org) directs people on how to request vaccination records for their children.
- [www.COVaxRates.org](http://www.COVaxRates.org) helps parents look up vaccination and exemption rates for schools and child care facilities in Colorado so they can make the best decision for their children.
- [www.SpreadTheVaxFacts.com](http://www.SpreadTheVaxFacts.com) guides people through information and misinformation about vaccines with advice from Colorado doctors who also are parents.
- [www.COVax4Kids.org](http://www.COVax4Kids.org) helps people find out if their kids are eligible for low- or no-cost vaccines and helps them find a provider who gives them.

Thank you for all that you do to keep your school’s children and families healthy. TCHD plans to send communication to school administrators too. Please contact Meredith Brown, Public Health Nurse, at 303-451-0123 or via email at [mbrown@tchd.org](mailto:mbrown@tchd.org), if you have any questions about this effort.