Ways Schools Can Support Routine Vaccination Catch-Up Among School-Aged Children:
A TOOLKIT FOR EDUCATIONAL PROFESSIONALS

June 2024
Background

Staying up-to-date on wellness visits and vaccinations is crucial for the health and well-being of students, families, teachers, and school staff. Routine vaccines and school vaccination requirements are effective tools to protect school communities against vaccine-preventable disease outbreaks, keeping children in school and ready to learn, and supporting schools’ operational, fiscal and academic goals by maximizing student attendance.

Vaccines can optimize student health and attendance by:

1. Providing immunity and preventing disease outbreaks from the beginning
2. Reducing the spread of disease in school as a part of an infection prevention control strategy, thereby reducing the:
   • Number of students and teachers who get sick and are absent
   • Probability of an unplanned school closure due to illness
3. Reducing the duration of disease and thereby number of school days missed due to poor health
Lingering Impact of COVID-19 on School Vaccination Coverage

Kindergarten routine vaccination coverage has remained high and stable for decades in the United States. During the two school years following the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, routine kindergarten vaccination coverage dropped by two percentage points nationwide from 95 percent to 93 percent, and by as much as 10 percent in some jurisdictions. This translates to an estimated 725,000 young learners who entered kindergarten during the COVID-19 pandemic and are potentially not protected against vaccine-preventable diseases such as measles and whooping cough. Influenza vaccination coverage also dropped five percent among children 6 months to 17 years old during the same time period.

Tiny declines in measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) vaccination coverage in Europe, similar to the U.S., is fueling a resurgence of measles with cases increasing by 30-fold in 2023 compared to the previous year. The U.S. is now also experiencing a rise in measles cases and outbreaks, underscoring the large impact that small declines in vaccination coverage can have and that under-vaccinated and un-vaccinated children are at risk of illness\(^1\), including serious illness, and absenteeism\(^{ii}\) \(^{iii}\) \(^{iv}\).

Call to Action

Despite the declines in coverage in recent years, we can get back on track and achieve the Healthy People 2030 target of 95 percent routine kindergarten vaccination coverage by ensuring all kindergarteners without a documented exemption are vaccinated. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) calls on healthcare providers and education professionals to support school-aged children to catch up on their vaccinations. Education professionals such as superintendents, school administrators, school nurses, and school health staff are trusted leaders within their communities. As such, they have unique opportunities to support families in getting their children up-to-date on immunizations.

While school vaccination requirements are established and vary by state or local jurisdictions, CDC encourages schools to increase awareness about the benefits of all Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommended vaccines. This includes vaccinations not required for school entry such as flu, COVID-19, and HPV.

Below are some select CDC resources that can help education professionals support vaccination school readiness:
How to Use this Toolkit:

To support partners in this effort, CDC developed a playbook, Let’s RISE (Routine Immunizations on Schedule for Everyone), that contains evidence-based strategies, resources, and data to get routine immunization coverage to Healthy People 2030 target coverage rates. This toolkit, developed by the Public Health Foundation (PHF) in collaboration with CDC and with input from the National Association of School Nurses (NASN), American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) School Health Initiatives, and the National Healthy Schools Collaborative at Kaiser Permanente. It is a companion resource that brings together additional actionable tools that can be used by education professionals to get childhood vaccination rates back to pre-pandemic levels. Resources contained in this toolkit are compiled from professional education organizations and school health partners, state and local health departments, public health partners, and government organizations (Appendix A). Jurisdiction-specific resources are included as examples of tools and communication materials that are currently being used to get kids caught up on routine vaccines.

The toolkit is organized around five evidence-based strategies for strengthening vaccination coverage:

1. Promote vaccination in back-to-school communication for families
2. Empower trusted messengers with information and guidance to improve vaccine-related conversations
3. Send reminders to families whose children are behind on routine childhood vaccinations
4. Expand access to immunization services for students
5. Utilize school vaccination data for action
Educational professionals can use these strategies and resources in multiple settings, such as schools and school-based health centers, to increase routine vaccination coverage among school-aged children. Resources in this toolkit include parent handouts, communication assets such as newsletter blurbs and social media content, conversation guides, and school-located vaccination guides. They can be downloaded, adapted, and shared with your school community.

In addition, the following organizations may be able to assist schools in implementing vaccination strategies to strengthen childhood immunization coverage.

- **National Association of City and County Health Officials (NACCHO) Directory – Local Health Departments** - Find and contact your local health department to request materials and support. Local health departments play a crucial role in vaccinations by coordinating distribution, organizing vaccination clinics, providing public education, and collaborating with healthcare providers to ensure efficient and widespread vaccine coverage within the community.

- **School-Based Health Alliance (SBHA)** - SBHA provides training and technical assistance to strengthen the capacity of health centers to address the unique health needs of school-aged children and improve the health outcomes of underserved youth, particularly in school-based health centers.

- **Medicaid – Technical Assistance Center (TAC)** - TAC provides technical assistance, resources, and support to State Medicaid agencies, local education agencies (LEAs), and school-based entities to provide greater assistance under Medicaid for physical and behavioral health services.
About PHF

The Public Health Foundation (PHF) is a national, non-profit organization whose mission is to advance the public health workforce to achieve organizational excellence. For more information, visit phf.org.

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Additional Immunization-Related Toolkits for Educational Professionals

Addressing the Decline of Vaccination Rates of U.S. Students: A Toolkit for Educational Leaders

- This comprehensive toolkit from The School Superintendents Association provides resources to support educational leaders in understanding and providing direction on how schools and districts can address the problem of vaccination declines among students. It includes six modules that address various essential questions, including the need for catch-up, what districts and school leaders can do to increase staff understanding of the implications of lower vaccination rates, and how to engage parents, families, and community partners in efforts to increase vaccination rates.

School-Based Health Alliance School/District Administrators Toolkit

- This comprehensive toolkit from the School-Based Health Alliance provides materials and resources to help educational leaders establish and maintain relationships with community health partners. Resources also include ways to promote childhood vaccines, answer parent questions, and more. While this resource is specific to the school/district administrators, many of the materials can be downloaded, adapted, and/or utilized by many others.

Shots for School Toolkit

- This comprehensive toolkit from the California Department of Public Health provides materials to support educational leaders, including implementation, promotion, and communication tools for schools, training on how to become a school immunization champion, and a data visualization tool. Although this resource is specific to California, it provides a good example of the many types of materials and resources to assist education professionals in strengthening their schools’ vaccination coverage.

School Communities Toolkit

- This informative toolkit from the United States Department of Health and Human Services has communications materials for school district leaders, teachers, parent leaders, and school supporters who want to help increase confidence in and uptake of COVID-19 vaccines in their school communities. These materials convey information from the CDC that has been tailored for a school community audience by the HHS COVID-19 Public Education Campaign.
Adolescent Immunization Resource Guide

- This informative resource guide from the Association of Immunization Managers (AIM) provides a selection of immunization program activities and strategies to enhance and improve adolescent vaccination. It contains topic-specific background information, overviews of programmatic activities, key lessons learned, direct contact information, and downloadable resources.
Back-to-school communication and school events are unique opportunities to encourage vaccination awareness, share school vaccine requirements, and provide facts about vaccines with families and prospective families. CDC recommends increasing awareness about the benefits of all ACIP-recommended vaccines, highlighting those required for school attendance.

Communication is often even more successful when parents receive consistent messages from multiple sources and channels, including the school district, school leader or school nurse, and local health department. Consider downloading, adapting, and sharing the resources below in person, on your district or school websites, or through your school's social media channels, or develop your own materials from these examples.

**Sample Letters**

School administrators can contact their state, territorial, tribal, or local health department to see whether they have sample notification letters. School administrators can also download, adapt, and brand these letters with their school or district logo for dissemination.

- Back-to-school Vaccination Catch-up - California Immunization Coalition (English and Spanish)
- Childcare Center Vaccination Catch-Up Letter - California Immunization Coalition (English and Spanish)

**Communication Guidance for School Community**

School administrators can use best practices for discussing vaccines with families and staff to help strengthen their confidence and trust in immunizations.

- Best Practices in Vaccine Communication - Project VCTR
• Messaging: Recommendations to Encourage Routine Childhood Vaccinations - Public Health Communications Collaborative (PHCC)
• Reframing the Conversation About Child and Adolescent Vaccinations - AAP and FrameWorks Institute
• Building Family Confidence in the COVID-19 Vaccine: Framing Strategies for School Nurses - FrameWorks Institute, National Association of School Nurses, and Institute for Educational Leadership

Parent Handouts and Factsheets

School administrators and school health services staff can share facts and answer frequently asked questions about immunizations. They can specifically highlight childhood vaccines by including links to vaccine handouts in school digital communications or by printing and sharing copies of handouts with families directly.

**NOTE:** Schools should direct families to the school nurse or their child’s healthcare providers if they have questions about these handouts or vaccinations.

General

• Reliable Sources of Immunization Information: Where Parents Can Go to Find Answers - Immunize.org
• Childhood Immunization Schedule - Families Fighting Flu
• Keep Your Child Healthy and in School - Attendance Works, Kaiser Permanente, and NASN
• Top Ten Reasons to Protect Your Child by Vaccinating - Immunize.org
• What If You Don't Vaccinate Your Child? - Immunize.org
• Flu Prevention Awareness Fact Sheets and Postcards - Families Fighting Flu

Adolescents

• Vaccines for Teens - UNITY Consortium
• Vaccines for Preteens and Teens: What Parents Should Know - CDC
• Human Papillomavirus: A Parent’s Guide to Preteen and Teen HPV Vaccination - Immunize.org
Help Families Make Shots Less Stressful

- [Taking Fear and Pain Out of Needles—for Your Child and You](HealthyChildren.org)
- [Make Shots Less Stressful - CDC](#)
- [How to Hold Your Child During Vaccination - CDC](#)
- [Before, During, and After Your Child’s Shots - CDC](#)

Digital and Social Media Assets

*School administrators can browse, upload, and post these shareable images, sample social media messages, and infographics for parents and guardians on your district or school website and/or social media channels.*

General

- [Parents PACK - Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP)](#) - The Parents PACK program offers vaccine information through a variety of mechanisms that make it convenient for families to have information when and where they need it, including through its monthly e-newsletter; mobile app, [Vaccines on the Go](#); downloadable booklets, Pinterest boards, [YouTube videos](#), online games, like [Vax Pack Hero](#) and “Just the Vax,” and a downloadable coloring book, “My Vaccine Activity Book” ([English](#) | [Spanish](#)).

Social Media

- [#DontWaitVaccinate School Aged Children - California Immunization Coalition](#)
- “Wild to Mild” Digital Campaign Assets for Flu Prevention - CDC
- [Social Media Assets for Flu Prevention - Families Fighting Flu](#)

Posters/Flyers

- [Flu Season Is Here Poster - UNITY Consortium](#)
- [Flu Prevention Posters | Raise Flu Awareness for Free - Families Fighting Flu](#)

Robo Call and Robo Text Messages

- [School Robo Calls Template - California Department of Public Health](#)
Transcribed Materials

- **Vaccinations for Infants and Children, Age 0-10 Years** - Immunize.org
  - Available in: English | Arabic | Chinese-Simplified | French | Korean | Russian | Spanish | Vietnamese

- **Vaccinations for Preteens and Teens** - immunize.org
  - Available in: English | Spanish | Arabic | Chinese-Simplified | French | Korean | Russian | Vietnamese

- **School Immunization Parent Chart** - Washington State Department of Health
  - Available in: English (PDF) | Español - Spanish (PDF) | አማርኛ - Amharic (PDF) | العربية - Arabic (PDF) | 中文 - Chinese (PDF) | Fosun Chuuk - Chuukese (PDF) | دری - Dari (PDF) | हिंदी - Hindi (PDF) | 한국어 - Korean (PDF) | Kajin Majol - Marshallese (PDF) | پښتو - Pashto (PDF) | Português - Portuguese (PDF) | پنجابی - Punjabi (PDF) | Русский - Russian (PDF) | Af-soomaali - Somali (PDF) | Tagalog (PDF) | Українська - Ukrainian (PDF) | Tiếng Việt - Vietnamese (PDF)

- **Addressing Vaccination Anxiety for Children Strategies for Vaccine Recipients and Caregivers** - Immunize.org
  - Available in: English | Spanish

- **Free Flu Educational Resources** | Recursos Gratuitos Contra la Gripe - Families Fighting Flu
  - Available in: English | Spanish

- **“Vaccination Is” Campaign** – National Resource Center for Refugees, Immigrants, and Migrants (NRC-RIM)
  - Available in: English | Spanish | Creole (Haitian Community) | Arabic (Iraqi Community) | Swahili (Congolese Community) | Kinyarwanda (Congolese Community) | Dari (Afgan Community) | Nepali (Bhutanese Community) | Somali | Ukrainian | Russian (Ukrainian Community)
How education professionals talk to students, parents, guardians, and families about vaccines is a crucial component of improving vaccine coverage, increasing vaccine confidence, and building trust. School nurses can use these resources to talk to parents about routine vaccines and promote health literacy.

1-on-1 Conversation Guides for Building Vaccine Confidence

These resources offer tips and techniques to support more productive and interpersonal conversations and communications about getting kids vaccinated. While some were developed for COVID-19 vaccines, the strategies can be used for all vaccines.

- Talking to Parents About Vaccines - CDC
- Vaccine Safety: Get the Facts - AAP
- HPV Vaccine Conversation Guide - CDC

Motivational Interviewing for Vaccine Educators

- Getting to the Heart and Mind of the Matter: A Toolkit to Build Confidence as a Trusted Messenger of Health Information - Washington State University
- Talking with Patients about COVID-19 Vaccination - CDC

Responding to Frequently Asked Questions

These resources offer information and communication strategies that educational professionals can use for guidance in crafting responses to parents/guardians frequently asked questions about vaccines.

- Prepare for Vaccine Questions Parents May Ask - CDC
- All About the Recommended Immunization Schedules - AAP
- Frequently Asked Questions - Voices for Vaccines
- Why Immunize Your Child - AAP
• Childhood Immunization Frequently Asked Questions - Washington State Department of Health
• Frequently Asked Questions: Adolescent Vaccines - UNITY Consortium
• HPV Vaccine: What Parents Need to Know - HealthyChildren.org, from the AAP
• Frequently Asked Questions about COVID-19 Vaccination - CDC

Addressing Misinformation and Disinformation

These resources offer credible websites, organizations, and communication strategies that educational professionals can use for guidance on crafting responses to misinformation and disinformation.

• Vaccines and Immunization: Myths and Misconceptions - World Health Organization
• Vaccines: The Myths and the Facts - American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology
• Vaccine Hesitancy Toolkit - Voices for Vaccines
• Vaccine Misinformation Guide - UNICEF

Additional Resources for School Nurses

• Immunization Resources - NASN
• HIPAA and Access to Patient Records During IQIP-VFC Visits - CDC
• Keep Track of Your Child's Immunization Records - CDC
Strategy 3

Send reminders to families whose children are behind on routine childhood vaccinations

School administrators and school-based health centers can send immunization reminders to encourage families to speak with their child’s healthcare provider and ensure their child is up-to-date on all required vaccinations. If a child’s vaccination data is available, the school-based health center also could notify families when a child is not up-to-date on school-required vaccinations.

Schools and School-Based Health Centers

- Reminder and Recall Strategies - AAP
- Sample Letter to Parents - New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services
- Notice of Immunizations Needed Letter Template - California Department of Public Health
School administrators and school health service staff can help make vaccination easy and accessible for all students by sharing information about where qualified families can access free routine childhood vaccinations as well as COVID-19 and flu vaccines. Schools can also expand access by partnering with vaccinators who can offer offsite community vaccination days or support school-located vaccination clinics at the start of the school year. This can help ensure that all non-exempt students are up-to-date and compliant with school requirements. While some resources below were developed for COVID-19 vaccines, the strategies can be used for all vaccines.

**Free Vaccines for Children**

- Factsheet: [Did You Know Your Child Can Get Free Vaccines? - CDC](#)
- Factsheet: [School-Based Health Centers (for Parents) - Nemours KidsHealth](#)
- Check with your health department to see if they have a list or map of Vaccines for Children (VFC) provider sites.

**Vaccine Locators** - To help families find convenient vaccination locations

- Find a [community health center](#) near you
- Find a [school-based health center](#) near you
- [Search for COVID-19 vaccine locations](#)
- [Find Your State Immunization Program | Vaccine Information - Immunize.org](#)

**Community Vaccination Days**

- Contact or use relationships with relevant [local immunization programs](#) and [health departments](#) to determine if they can offer community vaccination days during summer camp activities and the week(s) before and after the first day of school.
School-Based Health Services

The school setting offers a unique opportunity to enroll children in Medicaid, facilitating access to preventive health coverage and providing school-based services (SBS) directly to ANY Medicaid-enrolled child.

- Medicaid School-Based Services Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) | Medicaid
- Understanding School Medicaid - Healthy Students, Promising Futures (healthystudentspromisingfutures.org)

School-Located Vaccination Clinics

Toolkits

- School Nurses Toolkit - School-Based Health Alliance
- School-Located Vaccination Clinic (SLVC) Toolkit - NACCHO
- School-Located Vaccine Clinic Toolkit for Schools TK-12 - County of Los Angeles Department of Public Health
- Influenza School-Located Vaccination (SLV): Information for Planners - CDC

Additional Resources

- School-Located Vaccination School Nurse Planning Checklist – NASN and AIM
- Development of Memorandums of Understanding for School-Based Health Program Partnership - National School-Based Health Alliance
- School-Located Vaccination Clinic Toolkit: Robo Call Scripts and Newsletter Blurbs
- Handout for parents: After the Shots...what to do if your child has discomfort - Immunize.org
Utilize school vaccination data for action

Educational professionals and school administrators can use health department and/or school data to understand declines in vaccination coverage better and prioritize vaccination support and outreach in schools with lower coverage. Most schools are subject to federal privacy rules under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), which governs the confidentiality and sharing of information contained in student education records by schools. Use the resources below to get familiar with FERPA-compliant ways to share vaccine data.

- FERPA and HIPPA - U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
- Data Sharing Guidance for School Nurses - The Network for Public Health Law
- Factsheet: HIPAA + FERPA Key Considerations for School-Based Health Centers - School-Based Health Alliance and National Center for Youth Law
- Blog Post: What is FERPA, and how private is student vaccination information? – National Vaccine Information Center

CDC recommends using the following action plan for data-informed outreach:

1. Leverage existing data and school vaccine coverage maps
2. Identify schools with lower vaccination coverage
3. Prioritize outreach to schools with low or declining school vaccination coverage
4. Engage with school administrators and health services staff to determine why school vaccination coverage may be low
5. Develop a plan to support those schools and families to get up-to-date to strengthen school vaccination coverage
Shots for Schools – California

If school vaccination coverage data for your area is publicly available, consider using a data-informed outreach strategy. See this example of how this strategy could be implemented using the public data available from the California Department of Health as part of their Shots for Schools initiative.

Data Informed Outreach

1. Leverage existing data and school vaccine coverage maps

   How Is Your School Doing?

   Child Care

   Kindergarten

   7th Grade

2. Identify schools with lower vaccination coverage. For example, using California’s visualization tool, schools with red and orange pins have vaccination coverage below 90%

3. Prioritize outreach to schools with low or declining school vaccination coverage

4. Engage with school administrators and health services staff to determine why school vaccination coverage may be low

5. Develop a plan to support schools and families to get children vaccinated
Immunization training opportunities, online courses, and webinars can help educational professionals expand their knowledge and skills in advocating for on-time routine vaccination and navigating conversations about vaccines with families. All training listed are based on the vaccine recommendations made by ACIP.

**Public Health Foundation**
- [Building Awareness of Immunizations & Vaccines - Training Plan in the TRAIN Learning Network](#)
  - This training plan is designed to provide new or returning healthcare or public health professionals with an introductory overview of immunization and vaccines. These courses will build an understanding of immunization basics, including an overview of immunization schedules, how vaccine recommendations are made, and navigating vaccine hesitancy.

**National Association of School Nurses**
- [Immunization 101: A primer on school-recommended vaccinations](#)
  - The web-based course is designed to provide new school nurses with a primer on school-required child and adolescent vaccination and experienced school nurses with a refresher on vaccinations.

**Vaccinate Your Family University**
- [How to Debunk Misinformation and Bolster Vaccine Confidence](#)
  - Learn information during this 2-hour training to boost vaccine confidence and address misinformation both in person and online. This informative training will equip educational professionals with the knowledge and skills to advocate for vaccinations confidently.

**US Department of Education**
- [FERPA 101: For Local Education Agencies](#)
  - Explore this online training course on the basics of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). This training covers important information
on who is allowed to access student records, when these records can be shared, and more.

**CDC**
- **You Call The Shots: Web-Based Training Course**
  - This interactive, web-based immunization training course consists of a series of modules that discuss vaccine-preventable diseases and explain the latest recommendations for vaccine use. Each module provides learning opportunities, self-test practice questions, reference and resource materials, and an extensive glossary.
- **Immunization Courses: Webcasts and Self-Study**
  - Explore the numerous immunization education and training programs for healthcare personnel. Some courses offer continuing education (CE).

**California Department of Public Health**
- **School-Located Vaccine Events (SLVEs)**
  - This training module covers the benefits of school-located vaccination, how to identify individuals and partners involved, outlines the necessary resources, and addresses potential challenges in planning and executing SLVEs.

**Note:** CDC’s [Training and Continuing Education Online system (TCEO)](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed) has been the primary system that provides access to CDC educational activities for CE. To improve the learning experience, CDC’s CE process is moving from TCEO to [CDC TRAIN](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed).

**Thank You**

Public Health Foundation thanks the reviewing organizations for your constructive and insightful comments on the toolkit: National Association of School Nurses (NASN), American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) School Health Initiatives, and the National Healthy Schools Collaborative at Kaiser Permanente.
Appendix A

List of Organizations Cited for Resource Compilation

Education professional associations and school health partners

- Attendance Works
- Healthy Students Promising Futures
- Institute for Educational Leadership
- National Association of School Nurses
- National Center for Youth Law
- National School-Based Health Alliance
- Nemours KidsHealth
- The School Superintendents Association

State and local health departments

- California Department of Public Health
- Los Angeles County Department of Public Health
- Washington State Department of Health

Public health professional organizations and partners

- Association of Immunization Managers
- American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology
- American Academy of Pediatrics
- California Immunization Coalition
- Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia
- Families Fighting Flu
- FrameWorks Institute
- Immunize.org
- Kaiser Permanente
- National Association of County and City Health Officials
- National Vaccine Information Center
- New York State Health Foundation
- New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services
- Public Health Communications Collaborative
- The Network for Public Health Law
- The Public Good Projects
- UNITY Consortium
- Vaccinate Your Family University
Voices for Vaccines

**National and international governmental organizations**

- The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services
- Community Preventive Services Task Force
- U.S. Department of Education
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
- UNICEF
- Vaccines.gov
- World Health Organization

**Universities**

- University of Minnesota
- Washington State University

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