



## Department of Health

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Date: June 2021

To: Schools, Healthcare Providers and Local Health Departments

From: New York State Department of Health (NYS DOH), Bureau of Immunization

### **Call to Action: Catch up Children and Teens in Need of Vaccines, including COVID-19**

Please distribute to: Principal or person in charge of the school, School Nurse, Immunization Action Plan Coordinator, Medical Director, Director of Nursing, Pediatrics, Family Medicine, and all Primary Care Providers

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted many preventive services, including childhood and adolescent vaccination. According to data reported to the New York State Immunization Information System (NYSIIS), more than 400,000 fewer vaccine doses were administered to children and teens in New York State (NYS) outside of New York City in 2020 compared with 2019. Achieving and maintaining high immunization coverage rates is critical to prevent school and community outbreaks of vaccine preventable diseases such as measles, mumps and pertussis.

As travel increases and more in-person schooling resumes, the risk of outbreaks of vaccine preventable diseases in NYS increases. It is critical that students attending schools, child caring centers, nursery schools or pre-kindergarten programs in-person or via a hybrid model be up-to-date on all [vaccines required for school entrance and attendance in NYS](#) unless they have a medical exemption to required vaccines and that campers and camp staff be up-to-date on all vaccines recommended for their age according to the [Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices schedules](#). Additionally, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommend that [international travelers be up-to-date on routine vaccines](#) prior to travel, regardless of school or job requirements.

### **COVID-19 Vaccinations**

In addition to required vaccines, the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recently approved a vaccine against the virus that causes COVID-19 for emergency use for children ages 12 and over. Although fewer children have been infected with COVID-19 compared to adults, children can still become infected with the virus that causes COVID-19, they can become sick, and they can spread the virus to others. Increased COVID-19 vaccination rates amongst NYS's school-aged children is critical in a continued return to normalcy in classroom settings this fall. You should develop messaging to parents and guardians regarding consent, where to find the COVID-19 vaccine as well as it being safe, effective and free. Additionally, you should work with community partners to make the vaccine easily available to community residents.

### **CDC Call to Action**

Please review the attached Call to Action from the CDC. The document outlines steps that healthcare providers, healthcare systems, local health departments and schools can take to help children and teens catch up on the vaccines they need for camp and school, including

COVID-19 vaccinations as eligible, and prevent outbreaks of vaccine preventable diseases in New York. In addition to these suggestions, NYS DOH recommends that schools coordinate with local health departments to create opportunities for students to receive required vaccinations, and communicate this to families.

Thank you for your efforts to protect NYS children and teens against vaccine preventable diseases. For additional questions about NYS school immunization requirements, please contact the NYSDOH Bureau of Immunization, School Assessment Unit at: (518) 474-1944 or via email at [osas@health.ny.gov](mailto:osas@health.ny.gov).



## Help Kids' Safe Return to School - Get Caught Up on Recommended Vaccines

COVID-19 disrupted both in-person learning and routine well-child visits for many children over the last year. As a result, too many children have fallen behind on receiving recommended vaccines<sup>1</sup>. We all want our kids to be back in school safely, and that means getting caught up on vaccines that were missed over the last year. CDC's public sector vaccine ordering data show a 14% drop in 2020-2021 compared to 2019, and measles vaccine is down by more than 20%. Kids need to get caught up now so that they are protected as they go back to in-person learning. Catch-up vaccination will require efforts from healthcare systems, health care providers, schools, state and local governments, and families.

Healthcare systems and healthcare providers should:

- Identify families whose children have missed doses and contact them to schedule appointments
- Prompt clinicians when these children are seen to deliver vaccines that are due or overdue
- Let families know what precautions are in place for safe delivery of in-person services

Healthcare provider organizations should:

- Encourage members to identify and follow up with families whose children have missed doses to get appointments scheduled

Schools and state and local governments agencies should:

- Send reminders to families about school immunization requirements
- Follow-up with families of children who are not in compliance with requirements to encourage compliance
- Use the state's immunization information system's reminder-recall capacity to notify families whose children have fallen behind on vaccines

We all should:

- Communicate directly to families the importance of well-child visits and getting caught up on any recommended vaccines that were missed

Help us protect children by doing what you can to get kids caught up on recommended vaccines.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Nancy Messonnier".

Nancy Messonnier, MD  
Senior Official, CDC COVID-19 Vaccine Task Force  
Director, National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases

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<sup>1</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. General Best Practice Guidelines for Immunization: Vaccination Programs. [ACIP Vaccination Programs Guidelines for Immunization | Recommendations | CDC](#). Accessed March 21, 2021.