



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Idaho Public Health Districts

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July 2015

Immunizations in Idaho: Partnering to Protect



When it comes to health, we know that prevention is the best medicine. Unfortunately, it can take the impact of news headlines announcing a disease out-

break like whooping cough or measles to move people into action and get up-to-date on immunizations. In times of outbreak—and when the headlines are quiet—the consistent messaging of Idaho’s local public health districts (PHDs) remains: Immunizations help prevent disease. Idaho’s PHDs work diligently to emphasize the importance of immunizations as protection against preventable disease with a goal of increasing statewide immunization levels.

PHDs provide immunizations to the communities they serve, with a particular focus on children from birth through 18 years. Additionally, six of the seven health districts also offer vaccines to adults. Each health district houses immunization clinics, where the public can receive all types of vaccines – from an annual flu shot, to a child’s very first disease-preventing immunization. Appointments are accessible and efficient. The federally funded Vaccines for Children (VFC) Program, in combination with Idaho’s Immunization Assessment fund approved by the 2010 Idaho Legislature, ensures that all children have access to vaccines regardless of their ability to pay.

Vaccine Requirements and the Exemption Option

Group settings such as school and childcare can increase the risk for the spread of infectious disease among children. To help protect kids from vaccine-preventable diseases, certain immunizations are required before children can attend licensed childcare facilities and public, private, and parochial schools in Idaho. Local public health districts strongly support immunizations as one of the easiest and most effective tools in preventing serious infectious diseases; however, the state of Idaho affords parents the right to decide whether or not to vaccinate their children. Vaccine exemptions are allowable based on medical, religious, or personal/philosophical reasons, and by law, must be documented.

According to the Idaho Immunization Program, for the 2014 to 2015 school year, 84 percent of children enrolled as kindergartners in Idaho schools were considered adequately immunized.* However, Idaho ties with Vermont for the second-highest rate of kindergarten students with non-medical exemptions: About 6 percent enrolled in kindergarten had such exemptions in the last school year. In times of a disease outbreak, unvaccinated children may be excluded from attending school or childcare.

Partnerships and Outreach

While in-office public health immunization services are a critical to increasing rates in Idaho, working with area medical providers and taking immunization services out *into* the community are also essential to the public health mission. Partnerships with area school districts allow local health departments to bring the option of vaccines directly *to* children, and help reduce barriers of time, cost, and transportation for busy parents. In-school clinics help to decrease rates of missing or incomplete immunizations among school-aged children.

Working closely with medical providers in the community, local health departments provide outreach to educate providers on proper vaccine storage and immunization schedules – serving as a resource in the shared goal of creating healthier communities. In addition, Immunization Advisory Boards headed by local health departments bring community partners together to collaborate and strategize on ways to increase rates, support and educate health care personnel, and increase public awareness surrounding the importance of vaccines.

While Idaho continues to make gains in boosting childhood immunization rates, there is still significant work to be done. Idaho’s local health departments take their mission of preventing disease in the communities they serve, seriously, and are committed to building healthier communities through their multi-faceted immunization efforts.

*For the 2014 to 2015 school year, 84 percent of children enrolled as kindergartners in Idaho schools were considered adequately immunized.**

**In compliance with the standards set in Idaho Administrative Rules.*

HEALTHY PEOPLE IN HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

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