

## **NEWS RELEASE**

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### **North Dakota's Kindergarten Vaccination Rates Increase**

BISMARCK, N.D. – Data from the 2016-2017 school immunization assessment indicate that North Dakota's kindergarten immunization rates have increased from last year. The school immunization assessment is conducted annually by the North Dakota Department of Health (NDDoH). Results from this year's assessment show kindergarten vaccine rates have increased from about 91 percent last year to about 94 percent this year in North Dakota.

Measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR), diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis (DTaP) and chickenpox (varicella) vaccination coverage is important for kindergarteners. "Low vaccination rates leave North Dakota schools vulnerable to outbreaks caused by vaccine-preventable diseases, such as measles, mumps, or pertussis," said Lexie Barber, an epidemiologist with the NDDoH.

Because of low immunization rates in previous years, the NDDoH partnered with North Dakota State University's Center for Immunization Research and Education to communicate with key stakeholders across the state to better understand the attitudes, opinions, practices, and policies surrounding school immunization requirements, and exemptions to those requirements, in North Dakota.

Thanks to hard work from North Dakota schools, health care providers, local public health units, NDSU, the NDDoH, and the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, school immunization rates have improved dramatically in North Dakota. "This is great news for the state of North Dakota, but there is still room for improvement. It is necessary to reach immunization coverage of 95 percent or higher to maintain adequate immunity to prevent disease and ensure schools are a safe and healthy environment for students," said Barber.

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Before entering school in North Dakota, children must have five doses of DTaP, four doses of IPV (polio), three doses of HBV (hepatitis B), two doses of MMR, and two doses of varicella vaccine.

There also are vaccines that are required for adolescents when entering seventh grade. Seventh-grade requirements include an immunization against tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis (Tdap), and meningococcal disease (MCV4).

Children can be vaccinated at local public health units or private health care providers. Parents of children who will be attending kindergarten or seventh grade this upcoming fall are encouraged not to wait until the last minute to get their child vaccinated; make an appointment now. For more information on school immunization requirements, contact Lexie Barber, North Dakota Department of Health, at 701.328.2335, or visit our website at [www.ndhealth.gov/immunize](http://www.ndhealth.gov/immunize).

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