

NEWS RELEASE | **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** | April 26, 2019

Keep infants up to date on immunizations

BISMARCK, N.D. – During National Infant Immunization Week (NIIW), April 27 – May 4, 2019, the North Dakota Department of Health (NDDoH) is emphasizing the need to fully immunize children 24 months and younger against 14 vaccine-preventable diseases, like measles and whooping cough.

According to the National Immunization Survey, North Dakota's infant immunization rate is 78.8%. "About 20% of North Dakota infants are not fully vaccinated on time, leaving them vulnerable to diseases," said Molly Howell, immunization program manager for the NDDoH. "Parents are encouraged to make appointments for immunizations at 2, 4, 6, 12, 15 and 18 months of age."

2019 marks the 25th anniversary of the Vaccines for Children (VFC) program. VFC is a federally funded program that provides vaccines at no cost to children who might not otherwise be vaccinated because of inability to pay. "Most health care providers in North Dakota who see children are enrolled in the VFC Program, so cost should not be a barrier to immunization," said Howell.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), among children born during 1994-2018, immunization will prevent an estimated 419 million illnesses, 26.8 million hospitalizations, and 936,000 deaths over the course of their lifetimes.

So far in 2019, 626 individuals with measles from 22 states have been reported to the CDC; the greatest number of cases since measles was declared eliminated in the United States. The vast majority of people with measles were not vaccinated or had an unknown history of vaccination. "Measles is so contagious that if one person has it, up to 9 out of 10 people around them will also become infected if they are not protected. Immunocompromised individuals and infants younger than 12 months are not recommended to be vaccinated against measles, which is why it is so important for those around them to be vaccinated," said Howell.

As part of NIIW, the NDDoH also recognizes Kristina Kluth, registered nurse, from Sanford Health – Sanford Southwest Children's Clinic in Fargo, ND. Kluth received the CDC Childhood Immunization Champion Award for North Dakota. The award recognizes individuals who make a significant contribution toward improving public health through their work in childhood immunization.

For more information about NIIW, contact Molly Howell, NDDoH Immunization Program Manager, at 701-328-2378, 1-800-472-2180 or visit the website at www.ndhealth.gov/immunize.

#

For More Information Contact:

Molly Howell, MPH

North Dakota Department of Health

2635 East Main Ave. | Bismarck, ND 58506-5520

PHONE: (701) 328-4556 | EMAIL: mahowell@nd.gov

www.ndhealth.gov