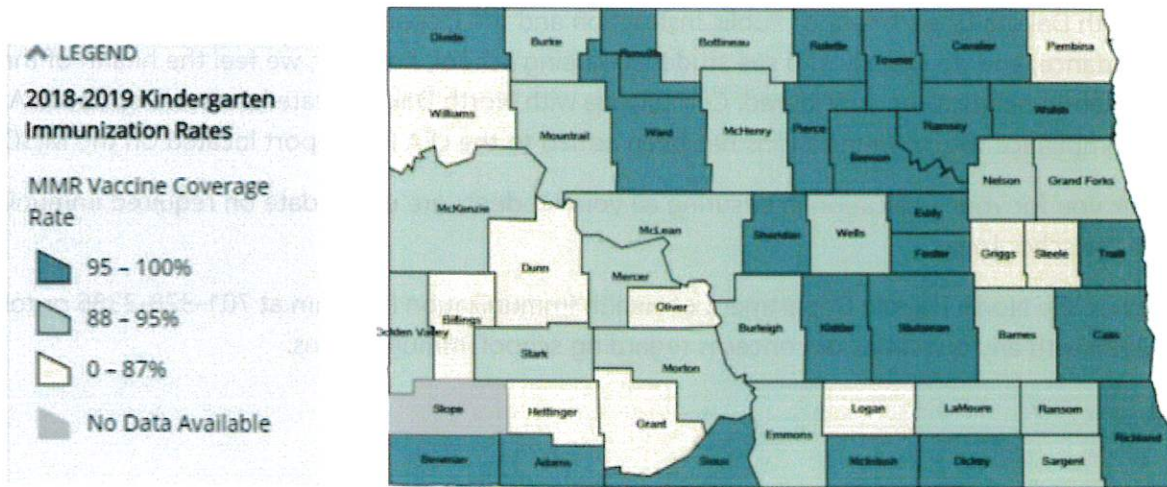


August 9, 2019

Dear School Superintendent and Principal:

The North Dakota Department of Public Instruction and North Dakota Department of Health would like to thank you for all your hard work over the past couple of years in improving school immunization coverage rates! During the 2014-2015 school year, kindergarten immunization rates in the state were as low as 90 percent. Thanks to your dedication, kindergarten immunization rates for this past year were around 94 percent. With the new school year, we are hoping to reach our goal of 95 percent immunization coverage for kindergarten students in North Dakota. Reaching an immunization coverage rate of 95 percent in your school will help ensure we have healthy and vibrant schools throughout North Dakota.

To maintain population immunity, which keeps diseases from spreading if introduced into a school, immunization rates must reach 95 percent. Once rates fall below the 95 percent threshold, schools become vulnerable to outbreaks of diseases. Below is a map showing MMR rates mapped by county. Counties in dark blue have immunization rates above 95%.



North Dakota state law requires students attending school to be up-to-date on immunizations that protect them from diseases such as measles, chickenpox, mumps, or pertussis. These diseases can quickly spread through a school environment. With the recent increase in measles cases in the United States, the importance of vaccinations and maintaining immunization rates has become more apparent. When outbreaks occur, not only is health at stake, but students who become ill or who are unvaccinated will have to spend time out of school (21 days for measles).

In order to inform the public on their school’s risk of vaccine preventable disease, the North Dakota Department of Health will be releasing school level kindergarten immunization and exemption rates. A link to these rates will be available on the Insights Dashboard on the individual school’s homepage under About School, as well as, the North Dakota Department of Health’s website. To protect the privacy of the students, schools with fewer than five

kindergarten students will not have data released. State, county, and school level immunization rates can be found at the following link: www.ndhealth.gov/Immunize/Schools-ChildCare/.

North Dakota Century Code, 23-07-17, mandates all students in kindergarten through 12th grade meet a minimum number of required immunizations prior to school entrance, and each school is legally responsible for excluding non-compliant students after October 1 of the school year. Children enrolling in school after October 1 have 30 days to be up-to-date or claim an exemption or they must be excluded from school. A toolkit with school immunization requirements, template letters for parents, and frequently asked questions, as well as other resources can be found at the following link: www.ndhealth.gov/Immunize/Schools-ChildCare/.

The McKinney-Vento Assistance Act which provides protections for those experiencing homelessness and Education Stability Act which provides protections for those in foster care, both require students to be enrolled immediately even if their immunization records are missing or unavailable. Homeless and Foster Care liaisons designated by the district should work with the youth and custodial agencies to obtain the student's immunization records quickly. The liaisons can collaborate and assist child and family services to ensure students receive any vaccinations they may need.

Both the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction and the Department of Health know the importance of school attendance, and do not want to see students missing school, however, we feel the health of the entire school population needs to be considered. Compliance with North Dakota State law is not optional. A statement regarding compliance with immunizations has been added to the LEA Fall Report located on the MISO1.

Again, thank you for your dedication in ensuring all your students are up-to-date on required immunizations at the start of the school year.

Please contact the North Dakota Department of Health Immunization Program at 701-328-3386 or toll-free at 800-472-2180 with any questions or concerns regarding school immunizations.

Sincerely,



Kirsten Baesler
State Superintendent



Mylynn Tufte
State Health Officer