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## Public Health & School Leaders Urge Michigan Parents to 'Catch Up' on Vaccines Before Heading Back to School

*In 46 Michigan Counties, Children's Vaccination Rates Have Dropped Below 70%*

**LANSING, Mich.** – Michigan public health and school leaders today urged Michigan parents to get their children caught up on vaccinations prior to returning to in-person classes this fall, to prevent serious communicable diseases such as measles, mumps, pertussis, chickenpox and more from spreading.

In many states including Michigan, vaccination rates of younger children dropped during the pandemic as parents postponed well-child visits to protect their kids from COVID-19. As a result, vaccination rates for Michigan children ages 19 to 36 months have fallen below 70% in more than half of the state (46 of 83 Michigan counties), according to June data from the Michigan Care Improvement Registry (MCIR). In seven Michigan counties and the City of Detroit, the rate has dropped below 60%.

Vaccination coverage in adolescents has also fallen since the start of the pandemic, from 77% in January 2020 to 73.7% in June 2021.

While community immunity is different for each disease and vaccine, doctors and public health experts generally agree that a 70% vaccination rate is the minimum protection level desired.

"As students return to in-person classes and as we're still dealing with rising COVID-19 cases due to the Delta variant, it's critical that we avoid outbreaks of other serious, preventable diseases," said Dr. Joneigh Khaldun, chief deputy director for health and chief medical executive for the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS). "It's more important than ever for families to put vaccinations at the top of their back-to-school to-do lists."

The 10 areas with the lowest vaccination rates for children ages 19 to 36 months are: Oscoda County (45%), City of Detroit (48.4%), Gladwin County (52%), Keweenaw County (55.6%), Iron County (57.6%), Cass County (58.7%), Lake County (59.3%), Clare County (59.6%), Sanilac County (60.8%) and Houghton County (61.3%).

MDHHS recently issued [updated recommendations](#) for preventing COVID-19 transmission in schools and reducing disruptions to in-person learning, which include promoting vaccination for eligible staff and students, masking indoors (regardless of vaccination status), practicing physical distancing, conducting testing and more.

While the COVID-19 vaccine is not currently part of the required childhood or adolescent schedule, 32.9% of Michigan 12- to 15-year-olds and 42.6% of 16- to 19-year-olds have received at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine.

“Getting our kids ready for school includes getting kids of all ages caught up on routine vaccines as well as getting adolescents the COVID-19 vaccine, so that we can stay in school and be safe,” said Veronica McNally, president of the Franny Strong Foundation and founder of the I Vaccinate campaign.

Following the [CDC-recommended schedule](#) protects children and teens from 16 vaccine-preventable diseases by age 18. The schedule is recommended by the CDC and is approved by every major medical organization in the country, including the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Academy of Family Physicians. It is also the only schedule that has been carefully tested, studied and reviewed by medical experts prior to being recommended for children.

“Vaccines have always been one of the best tools in our public health toolbox for mitigating risk and keeping our communities healthy, and the pandemic and subsequent COVID-19 vaccine have proven that even more so,” said Ingham County Health Officer Linda Vail.

With flu season approaching, Michiganders should also visit their local health department, family doctor or retail pharmacy to get the flu vaccine when available to protect themselves and their families.

Ingham County Health Department is partnering with East Lansing Public Schools its back-to-school immunization efforts, including an event held the same day as the press conference providing free school-required and COVID-19 vaccinations to students.

“Our students, teachers, staff and parents have been so resilient over the past year and a half to get us to this point where we can start the school year in-person,” said Terah Chambers, parent and president of the East Lansing School Board. “We can’t let up now. We must protect ourselves and each other by making sure we’re all up to date on all of our vaccinations.”

Michigan parents with vaccination questions can find answers based entirely on medical science at [IVaccinate.org](#).

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The nationally recognized **I Vaccinate campaign** is a joint public-private effort of the Franny Strong Foundation and MDHHS and is supported by the CDC and every major medical and health organization in the state, including the Michigan Academy of Family Physicians, Michigan Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, Michigan Health & Hospital Association, Michigan Osteopathic Association and Michigan State Medical Society. For more information, visit [IVaccinate.org](#). Follow I Vaccinate on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) at @IVaccinateMI.