

August 27, 2021

Dear Administrator,

As you welcome students back to the classroom for a new school year, we would like to share with you an important reminder. 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 responsible for excluding non-compliant students after October 1st. Children enrolling in school after October 1st have 30 days to be up-to-date or claim an exemption, or they must be excluded from school. **Even if a child is participating in distance learning, they are still required to be up-to-date on their immunizations.** Schools should notify parents of students of immunization requirements for this fall. Immunization requirements for the 2021-2022 school year, template letters for parents, and frequently asked questions can be found on our [website](#).

With the current COVID-19 pandemic in the United States and across the world, the importance of routine vaccinations and maintaining immunization rates has become more critical. Immunization rates must reach 95% in order to keep diseases from spreading if introduced into a school. Once rates fall below the 95% threshold, schools become vulnerable to outbreaks of diseases. Having vaccine-preventable diseases and COVID-19 circulating within a school at the same time would lead to large numbers of school absences, school closures, and adversely affect the health of our students.

This fall and winter, both COVID-19 and influenza will be circulating at the same time. Both are respiratory illnesses and have similar symptoms – both are prevented by safe and effective vaccines. Since fall of 2019, influenza and COVID-19 infections in the US have resulted in 615 deaths in people ages 18 and under. All school-age children are eligible for influenza vaccination, and children ages 12 and up are currently eligible for COVID-19 vaccination. While these vaccines are not required for school entry, schools can play a key role in increasing influenza and COVID-19 vaccination rates by encouraging vaccination and hosting school-located vaccination clinics.

Please contact the NDDoH Division of Immunization at 701-328-3386 or toll-free at 800-472-2180 with any questions or concerns regarding school immunizations.



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