



## Department of Health

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To: Schools, Healthcare Providers and Local Health Departments

From: New York State Department of Health (NYS DOH), Bureau of Immunization

### **Call to Action: Catch up Children and Teens in Need of Vaccines, including COVID-19**

Please distribute to: Principal or person in charge of the school, School Nurse, Immunization Action Plan Coordinator, Medical Director, Director of Nursing, Pediatrics, Family Medicine, and all Primary Care Providers

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted many preventive services, including childhood and adolescent vaccination. According to data reported to the New York State Immunization Information System (NYSIIS), more than 400,000 fewer vaccine doses were administered to children and teens in New York State (NYS) outside of New York City in 2020 compared with 2019. Achieving and maintaining high immunization coverage rates is critical to prevent school and community outbreaks of vaccine preventable diseases such as measles, mumps and pertussis.

As travel increases and more in-person schooling resumes, the risk of outbreaks of vaccine preventable diseases in NYS increases. It is critical that students attending schools, child caring centers, nursery schools or pre-kindergarten programs in-person or via a hybrid model be up-to-date on all [vaccines required for school entrance and attendance in NYS](#) unless they have a medical exemption to required vaccines and that campers and camp staff be up-to-date on all vaccines recommended for their age according to the [Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices schedules](#). Additionally, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommend that [international travelers be up-to-date on routine vaccines](#) prior to travel, regardless of school or job requirements.

### **COVID-19 Vaccinations**

In addition to required vaccines, the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recently approved a vaccine against the virus that causes COVID-19 for emergency use for children ages 12 and over. Although fewer children have been infected with COVID-19 compared to adults, children can still become infected with the virus that causes COVID-19, they can become sick, and they can spread the virus to others. Increased COVID-19 vaccination rates amongst NYS's school-aged children is critical in a continued return to normalcy in classroom settings this fall. You should develop messaging to parents and guardians regarding consent, where to find the COVID-19 vaccine as well as it being safe, effective and free. Additionally, you should work with community partners to make the vaccine easily available to community residents.

### **CDC Call to Action**

Please review the attached Call to Action from the CDC. The document outlines steps that healthcare providers, healthcare systems, local health departments and schools can take to help children and teens catch up on the vaccines they need for camp and school, including

COVID-19 vaccinations as eligible, and prevent outbreaks of vaccine preventable diseases in New York. In addition to these suggestions, NYS DOH recommends that schools coordinate with local health departments to create opportunities for students to receive required vaccinations, and communicate this to families.

Thank you for your efforts to protect NYS children and teens against vaccine preventable diseases. For additional questions about NYS school immunization requirements, please contact the NYSDOH Bureau of Immunization, School Assessment Unit at: (518) 474-1944 or via email at [osas@health.ny.gov](mailto:osas@health.ny.gov).