

# STATE OF CONNECTICUT

## DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Renée D. Coleman-Mitchell, MPH  
Commissioner



Ned Lamont  
Governor  
Susan Bysiewicz  
Lt. Governor

April 29, 2019

Dear School Superintendents, Medical Advisors, School Nurses and Supervisors:

Re: School Immunization Rates

As Connecticut's new Commissioner for the Department of Public Health, I am writing to inform you about a decision I have made regarding school immunization data in our state. As you are aware, per State of Connecticut Regulation ([Sec. 10-204a-4](#)), the Department of Public Health has been collecting data on immunization rates at schools for decades. Currently, statewide and county-level data are available to the public. By the end of this week, the Department of Public Health will be publishing immunization rate data at the school level.

As of April 24<sup>th</sup>, at least 695 measles cases have been confirmed nationally in 22 states during 2019. This is the greatest number of cases reported in the United States since measles was eliminated from this country in 2000. There is currently an active, major measles outbreak in New York City impacting hundreds of families. In Connecticut, so far this year three measles cases have been confirmed.

With your help, Connecticut has become a national leader in the percentage of children up-to-date with immunization schedules. While Connecticut's immunization rate for measles, mumps, and rubella vaccination of Kindergarteners remained high last year at 96.5%, the number of fully immunized students, upon Kindergarten and 7<sup>th</sup> Grade entry, is trending lower.

A disease outbreak is less likely to occur at schools where high numbers of students are immunized. Known as Herd Immunity, when almost all the children have immunity, a disease is much less likely to appear at the school and infect children who have not been vaccinated. Herd Immunity is achieved when the vaccination rate in a community is high enough to protect unvaccinated children. This is especially important for medically fragile children. Some children have conditions that affect their immunity, including illnesses that require chemotherapy or drugs that suppress their immune systems. These children cannot be safely vaccinated, and at the same time, they are less able to fight off illness when they are infected. Consequently, this information bears special importance to the parents or guardians of such children, who may wish to access information about their child's school vaccination rates for their child's protection.



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In addition, the Department of Public Health's goal in releasing school-level information is to increase public awareness of immunization rates in local communities, which may lead to increased engagement and focus on increasing immunization rates to reduce the risk of vaccine-preventable diseases.

By the end of this week, the Department of Public Health will be posting public and private school immunization-related rates from the 2017-2018 school survey on our website. It is also anticipated that school-level immunization rate data will be released annually hereafter. Schools will not have to gather any more information than is already reported on the annual school survey.

More information on school immunization and exemption rates, as measured by the annual immunization survey is available on the Department of Public Health's website at: <https://portal.ct.gov/DPH/Immunizations/School-Survey>. The Department of Public Health anticipates that the school-level data will also be posted on this webpage.

I have consulted with Connecticut State Department of Education Commissioner Dr. Dianna Wentzell and she supports my decision to publish immunization rate data at the school level for the purpose of improving school immunization rates and reducing the risk of vaccine preventable diseases.

Thank you for all the hard work you do to educate our children and your continued partnership to ensure their good health and safety.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this matter, please contact the Department of Public Health's Immunization Program at 860-509-7929 or via email at [dph.immunizations@ct.gov](mailto:dph.immunizations@ct.gov)

Sincerely,



Renée D. Coleman-Mitchell, MPH  
Commissioner, Connecticut Department of Public Health

Cc: Commissioner Dianna R. Wentzell, Connecticut State Department of Education