



Department of Public Instruction
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Kirsten Baesler
State Superintendent
Robert J. Christman
Deputy Superintendent

August 26, 2013

Dear School Superintendent and Principal:

Each fall offers excitement and opportunity as school age youth prepare for another school year. North Dakota excels at education because we have the community atmosphere and international spirit of empowering students to engage and learn. The first few days and weeks are busy as routines are created for staff, students and families. With this in mind, it is also imperative that we ensure our schools are protected against the increasing public health challenge caused by insufficient immunizations.

Approximately 10,000 North Dakota students—about 8 percent of the total public school enrollment—are not fully compliant with immunization requirements as mandated by NDCC 23-07-17.1. As a public health issue, anything less than maximum compliance has the potential to introduce outbreaks of chickenpox, measles or mumps; potentially impacting attendance and health of siblings, classrooms, grades and entire schools within an extracurricular region.

This risk can be significantly minimized by ensuring students' immunization records are up-to-date upon registration and that students who require additional vaccinations get them in a timely manner. We realize that, with the influx of new students in many communities, this may take additional effort – an effort well worth the benefits.

By law, schools are not required to enroll and accept students without proof of up-to-date immunization requirements, with the exception of approved exemptions for religious, philosophical or medical reasons. Neither the Department of Public Instruction nor the Department of Health want children excluded from school or the classroom, but the health and welfare of the greater school population must be considered and compliance with NDCC 23-07-17.1 is not optional.

Working together the next several months, the Department of Public Instruction and the Department of Health will verify immunization compliance within all districts and provide assistance towards 100% coverage in our mutual goal of increasing protections to youth.

We strongly request you make a concerted effort to ensure all students have received the immunizations required for their age groups and have the appropriate verification for your records. If you have any questions, please contact Amy Schwartz, North Dakota Department of Health, at (701) 328-2335 or amshwartz@nd.gov or Valerie Fischer, North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, at (701) 328-4138 or vfischer@nd.gov.

Kirsten Baesler
State Superintendent

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