

2024 Well Child Communications Plan

Background

As the new school year approaches, ensuring the health and well-being of children becomes a critical priority for parents, schools, and communities. Well Child visits and vaccinations play a pivotal role in safeguarding children's health, preventing the spread of infectious diseases, and fostering a safe school environment. Despite the proven benefits, a significant number of children do not receive timely well child visits or are not up to date with their vaccinations.

In DC, vaccination coverage has been improving year over year from the pandemic recovery. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's latest Kindergarten Vaccination Coverage report, DC improved nearly 10% in the last two school years for key vaccines like MMR (measles, mumps and rubella). As of May 2024, DC's coverage for MMR was 92%, but exemption rates have been rising, contributing to the vulnerability of school communities to outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases.

To stay on-schedule with routine immunizations and pediatric care, it is of utmost importance for parents to collaborate with their child's medical provider to ensure they catch up on missed well-child visits and school-required vaccines. Well-child visits serve as essential health check-ups for multiple reasons, including:

- Tracking growth and development, monitoring milestones, social behaviors, and learning progress.
- Providing a platform for parents/guardians to discuss any concerns about their child's health with healthcare professionals; and
- Administering scheduled vaccinations to protect against illnesses such as measles, whooping cough (pertussis), and 12 other serious diseases.

DC Health's Immunization Division

The Immunization Division, which is part of DC Health's Health Care Access Bureau, in the Community Health Administration helps reduce the spread of vaccine preventable diseases to residents, visitors, and those working or doing business in the District. This is accomplished through education and community engagement, analyzing and interpreting vaccine coverage data, administering the federal government Vaccines for Children/317, and facilitating access to vaccination for priority populations.

The Division hosts the District of Columbia Immunization Information System (DOCIIS), which is a population health data management system holding over 1 million unique immunization records. Beginning in 2021, the Immunization Division upgraded DOCIIS to improve data quality and share and/or exchange immunization data with stakeholders. To date, over 250 providers contribute immunization data to DOCIIS.

In 2022, the Immunization Division launched a companion reporting tool, the Immunization Compliance Portal to allow users to assess and monitor school and student immunization compliance. In 2023 and 2024, we have continued to upgrade this tool adding additional reporting and the ability to print letters notifying families of missing vaccines and mailing labels. These functional improvements serve to facilitate the work of school nurses, IPOCs, and school leaders ensuring that children are immunized and eligible to attend school.

In an effort to ensure all students remain safe and up to date with immunization compliance, the Immunization Division shifted its approach to enforcement in 2023 to focus on four key grades for temporary exclusion. Non-compliant students in grades Pre-K3, Kindergarten, 7 and 11 will be eligible for temporary exclusion. These grades were selected because they occur soon *after* age bands in which vaccines are first recommended. Most students in these grades will not age into non-compliance during the school year.

Recently, the Immunization Division has also done the following:

- Issuing Vaccines for Children (VFC) providers immunization coverage report cards via DOCIIS 2.0;
- Training school nurses and immunization points of contact to use the Immunization Compliance Portal to monitor school and student-level vaccine compliance;
- Open access to DCPS School-Based Health Centers to all students during the summer break, regardless of school enrollment status;
- Enlisting dually enrolled VFC COVID-19 vaccine providers to engage in the Vaccine Exchange; a tool created to allow a marketplace for community vaccination event requests to be paired with an enrolled COVID-19 provider;
- Enrolling retail pharmacies in the VFC program;
- Amplifying vaccine messages to community-based organizations;
- Partnering with managed care organizations to closely follow beneficiaries' vaccination status;
- Conducting school-located vaccination-only clinics with mobile, dually enrolled VFC and COVID-19 providers;
- Continuing regular communications with providers including monthly meetings and regular communication with VFC providers;
- Updating a list and a map of pediatric practice locations to showcase access points across the District including those that provide COVID-19 vaccinations;
- Facilitating onboarding of providers to the District of Columbia Immunization Information System (DOCIIS), to increase reporting of immunization events; and District Immunization Compliance Data.

Goals/Objectives

To increase the number of children receiving well child visits and vaccinations before the start of the school year by raising awareness about the importance of well child visits and vaccinations; provide clear, accessible information about how and where to obtain these services; reduce barriers to access, such as cost, transportation, and appointment availability; and collaborate with District government education partners, schools, healthcare providers, and community organizations to promote the campaign.

Target Audience

The **primary target audience** for this campaign is families of school-aged children (ages 3-18) and the **secondary target audience** is District Government education partners, healthcare providers, school administrators, community organizations, and policymakers.

Key Messages

- **The Importance of Well Child Visits**
 - Regular check-ups help in the early detection of health issues.
 - Preventive screenings can catch potential problems before they become serious.
 - Doctors track physical growth, ensuring children are developing properly.
 - Behavioral and developmental milestones are assessed to ensure healthy progress.
 - Personalized health advice is given based on the child's specific needs.
 - Regular visits establish a routine for children, making them comfortable with healthcare.
 - Consistent healthcare relationships build trust between families and providers.
- **Vaccination Benefits**
 - Vaccinations protect children from serious, potentially life-threatening diseases.
 - Preventing diseases through vaccination is safer and less costly than treating them.
 - Vaccinated children are less likely to miss school due to illness.
 - Schools with high vaccination rates have lower outbreaks of infectious diseases.
 - Vaccinations are often required for school enrollment, ensuring a safer environment for all.
 - Vaccinations provide long-term protection against diseases into adulthood.
 - Preventing diseases early can prevent complications and chronic health issues later in life.
 - Vaccinated communities protect those who cannot be vaccinated, like infants or immunocompromised individuals.
 - Trust in vaccines is built through millions of conversations between parents, doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and community members.

Dissemination Tactics

Deliverable	Objective	Channel	Evaluation
Newspapers	Encourage families to take their children to get well child visits (including vaccinations)	Washington Post East of the River Washington Blade Washington Informer El Tiempo	Readership
Social Media		Facebook Instagram X (Formerly known as Twitter)	Number of Likes Number of Reposts Number of Shares Number/Types of comments Number of webpage hits
Television		Comcast/Effectv	Impressions Frequency Through-plays Views Clicks Click-through rates
Radio		Radio One El Zol FM	Frequency Reach
Transit		Clear Channel OUTFRONT	Impressions
Website	Provide resources and materials related to the importance of well child visits.	dchealth.dc.gov osse.dc.gov dcps.gov	Page views Top referrers
Webinars	Provide healthcare providers and education partners with trainings and up-to-date information on vaccinations and reporting guidelines in the District.	WebEx, Teams or another identified platform	Attendees Post-survey
Letters	To remind families with children who are overdue for vaccines.	USPS Mail	
Email		CBOs, FBOs, ANCs, Coalitions, etc.	

Materials

Radio PSA

Hey DC families, the school year is just around the corner! Is your child ready?

Make sure they are up to date with their vaccinations by scheduling their well child visit. These visits are essential for tracking growth, catching health issues early, and keeping them protected from serious diseases.

Call your healthcare provider or visit [dc health-dot-dc-dot-gov slash immunizations](https://dc.health-dot-dc-dot-gov/slash-immunizations) to find a clinic near you. That's [dc health-dot-dc-dot-gov slash immunizations](https://dc.health-dot-dc-dot-gov/slash-immunizations).

Let's keep our kids healthy and ready to learn by putting vaccines on your back-to-school list.

A message from DC Health and Mayor Muriel Bowser.

Video PSA

[Click here to view video.](#)

Social Media/Digital Ad

Put Vaccines On Your Back-to-School List

Vaccines are the best protection against vaccine-preventable diseases.

All DC students must have their immunizations **up-to-date before the next school year begins**. The COVID-19 vaccine is also available for eligible age groups.

dchealth.dc.gov/immunizations

DC HEALTH
GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
MURIEL BOWSER, MAYOR

Ponga las vacunas en su lista de regreso a la escuela.

Las vacunas son la mejor protección contra las enfermedades prevenibles mediante vacunación.

Todos los estudiantes del Distrito de Columbia **deben tener sus vacunas al día antes de que comience el próximo año escolar**. La vacuna contra el COVID-19 también está disponible para aquellos grupos de edad que califiquen.

dchealth.dc.gov/immunizations

DC HEALTH
GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
MURIEL BOWSER, MAYOR

(Ask the [Office of Communications and Community Relations](#) to view other versions)



Social Media

English

- Heading back to school? Don't forget to add vaccines to your checklist? Vaccines protect your kids and their classmates. Stay healthy, stay safe! For more info, visit dchealth.dc.gov/immunizations.
- Back-to-school checklist: 📁✏️ Pencils ✓ Notebooks ✓ Vaccines ✓ Keeping our kids safe and healthy is the top priority! Check dchealth.dc.gov/immunizations for the most up-to-date information on getting vaccinated in DC.

- Back to school season is here! Ensure your kids stay on track with their vaccinations. Find how you can stay on track by visiting dchealth.dc.gov/immunizations.

Spanish

- ¿Regresando a clases? No olvides agregar las vacunas a tu lista. Las vacunas protegen a tus hijos y a sus compañeros. ¡Mantente sano, mantente seguro! Para más información, visita dchealth.dc.gov/immunizations.
- Lista de regreso a clases:   Lápices ✓ Cuadernos ✓ Vacunas ✓ Mantener a nuestros niños seguros y saludables es la prioridad. Visite dchealth.dc.gov/immunizations para obtener la información más actualizada sobre la vacunación en DC.
- Regreso a clases significa asegurarse de que tus hijos estén al día con sus vacunas. ¡Mantenerlos protegidos ayuda a todos a mantenerse saludables! Visite dchealth.dc.gov/immunizations para más información.