**State education and health agencies issue reminder
for immunizations as students prepare for new school year**

*August marks National Immunization Awareness Month*

**SPRINGFIELD** — As students are beginning to head back to school, the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) and the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) encourage parents and guardians to ensure their children’s immunizations are up to date.

Changes to school immunization requirements for the 2016-2017 school year include

o Students in grades kindergarten, two, six, seven, eight, nine, 10, and 11 must show proof of having received two doses of varicella. Students in all other grades must show proof of one dose of varicella. The two-dose rule formerly applied only to students entering grades kindergarten, six, seven, nine, and 10.

o Students entering grades six, seven, and 12 must show proof of immunization for meningococcal. This immunization formerly was required only of sixth- and 12th-graders.

These vaccination revisions are supported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices.

IDPH’s [Immunization Quick Reference Guide](http://www.dph.illinois.gov/sites/default/files/publications/2016-17-idph-min-imm-req-school-dcc-entry-040716_0.pdf) provides additional details about the 2016-17 requirements.

“Immunizations are in place to protect students, families, and communities,” said State Superintendent of Education Tony Smith, Ph.D. “Our students need to stay healthy in order to be able to put their best foot forward each day and continue to grow both in the classroom and outside of it.”

The State of Illinois requires children have vaccinations before they enter school to protect them from a variety of diseases. For school entrance, students must show proof of vaccination against diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus, polio, measles, mumps, rubella, haemophilus influenza type b, hepatitis b, and varicella, as well as pneumococcal and now meningococcal (depending on age) vaccinations. For more information about immunizations, including [vaccination schedules](http://www.idph.state.il.us/about/pgci.htm), visit [www.dph.illinois.gov/topics-services/prevention-wellness/immunization](http://www.dph.illinois.gov/topics-services/prevention-wellness/immunization).

“Preventing diseases through vaccination is a proven way to improve community health,” said Nirav D. Shah, director of the Illinois Department of Public Health. “By promoting immunizations and increasing vaccination rates, especially among children, we can prevent many chronic illnesses and keep students healthy in school and ready to learn.”

August marks [National Immunization Awareness Month](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/events/niam.html), which aims to educate people of all ages about the importance of protecting their health by being immunized against infectious diseases.

In addition to immunizations, all students enrolling in kindergarten -- in a public or private school -- and any student enrolling for the first time in Illinois (with the exception of preschoolers) must also have an eye examination. The eye exam needs to be performed by a licensed optometrist or medical doctor who performs eye exams and is licensed by the Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation. All eye exams must be completed within one year prior to Oct. 15.

Furthermore, all students enrolled in kindergarten, the second, and the sixth grades are required to have a dental examination.

Also, all children must complete a physical examination prior to entering Illinois schools for the first time, prior to the date of entering kindergarten or first grade, prior to entering sixth grade, and prior to entering ninth grade. The exam includes gender and date of birth; an evaluation of height, weight, BMI, blood pressure, skin, eyes, ears, nose, throat, mouth/dental; cardiovascular, respiratory, gastrointestinal, genito-urinary, neurological, and musculoskeletal evaluations; spinal examination; evaluation of nutritional status; lead screening; and other evaluations deemed necessary by the health care provider.

These student health requirements for entry apply to all schools in Illinois - public, charter, or private. Parents and guardians should contact their health care provider, local health department, or pharmacy to schedule an appointment to receive the recommended and required vaccinations. It is important to keep an immunization record card for your child’s entry into school.

Students who do not show proof of the health examinations and/or immunizations by Oct. 15, or an earlier date if one is established by their local school board, are to be excluded from school until the requirements are met. Excluding students from attendance assures that students and staff are protected from certain diseases.

IDPH offers additional immunization information on its [website](http://www.dph.illinois.gov/). The Illinois Help Me Grow helpline at 1-800-323-GROW (voice and TTY) provides additional immunization information. The Vaccines for Children program provides vaccines at no cost to children from low-income families that may not be able to afford immunizations. For information, call (312) 746-6050 in Chicago or (217) 785-1455 for the rest of the state.

For additional information about immunizations in Illinois, visit

* **ISBE’s School Health Issues:** <http://www.isbe.net/school_health.htm#immu>
* **Administrative Rules for Basic Immunizations:** <http://www.ilga.gov/commission/jcar/admincode/077/077006650B02400R.html>

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