



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **Wolf Administration Encourages Pennsylvanians to Make Immunization Part of Back-to-School Planning**

**Harrisburg, PA** - The Pennsylvania departments of Education, Health, Human Services and Insurance are reminding families to ensure their children's immunizations are up to date as part of back-to-school preparations.

Vaccine-preventable diseases, such as chicken pox, meningitis, measles, whooping cough, and others are still seen across the commonwealth. Keeping children up to date on vaccinations is the best way to keep them healthy and reduce unnecessary absences from school. Staying up to date with immunizations provides the best protection against disease and is essential to individual and population health.

Under the Affordable Care Act, most insurance plans, including those bought through Pennie®, as well as the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) and Medicaid, are required to cover school vaccinations as a free preventive service without charging a copayment or coinsurance.

"As students head back to school this year, parents no doubt have many decisions and concerns to consider," said Acting Insurance Commissioner Michael Humphreys. "Thankfully,

the cost of school vaccinations isn't one of them, as most insurance plans cover required immunizations with no cost to the consumer."

These immunizations are covered regardless of whether or not the yearly deductible has been met. However, it is important to make sure that the doctor or provider who administers the immunization is within your health insurance plan's network, or you may be responsible for the cost.

Immunization-preventable diseases can be very dangerous, may require hospitalization, and can even result in death. A discussion with your doctor or your child's doctor can help determine which vaccines are needed.

"Getting vaccinated and staying up to date is one of the easiest, most cost-effective ways to prevent disease," said Acting Secretary of Health and Pennsylvania Physician General Dr. Denise Johnson. "Vaccines help protect everyone, including people with compromised immune systems who cannot get vaccinated. It is essential that everyone, especially children, are up-to-date on all recommended immunizations before heading back to school."

In recent years, a change in state regulations altered the provisional period in which students could attend school without their vaccinations from eight months to five days. Children in grades K-12 need the following immunizations for attendance: tetanus, diphtheria, polio, MMR (measles, mumps, rubella), hepatitis B, and chickenpox. Children entering the seventh grade also need additional immunizations of meningococcal conjugate vaccine (MCV) and tetanus, diphtheria, acellular pertussis (Tdap). If a child does not have at least one dose of the above immunizations, they risk exclusion from school. Additionally, while the COVID-19 vaccine is not mandatory to attend school, the Wolf Administration encourages Pennsylvanians ages 5 and older to get the COVID-19 vaccine to help ensure their safety during the 2022-2023 school year.

Health coverage is available for all children in Pennsylvania. No family makes too much money to purchase coverage through CHIP, and families or children may qualify for coverage through Medical Assistance. CHIP and Medicaid can ensure parents can access affordable health coverage and care for their children. Immunizations and well-child visits necessary to help kids stay healthy are covered through both of these programs.

"As a parent, I want to do everything I can to protect my kids and keep them safe. By vaccinating my kids, I am sending them off to school this fall knowing that they are as protected as possible from preventable diseases, and I encourage other parents to do the same," said Acting DHS Secretary Meg Snead. "DHS administers programs like Medical Assistance and CHIP so that families and children don't have to go without health care coverage, including important and potentially life-saving vaccinations."

More information on CHIP can be found at [www.chipcoverspakids.com](http://www.chipcoverspakids.com). Families can apply for coverage through the CHIP program and determine their eligibility for Medical Assistance and other public assistance programs online at [www.compass.state.pa.us](http://www.compass.state.pa.us). Those who prefer to submit paper documents can print from the website or request an application by phone at 1-800-692-7462 and mail it to their [local County Assistance Office \(CAO\)](#). Families do not need to know their own eligibility in order to apply.

"Students and educators are preparing for the beginning of a new school year and opportunities to teach, learn, and grow together in classrooms across the commonwealth," said Acting

Secretary Eric Hagarty. "As part of back-to-school preparations, I encourage families to ensure their children's immunizations are up to date."

Anyone looking to visit a local immunization clinic to receive vaccinations should call 1-877-PA-HEALTH (1-877-724-3258) to schedule an appointment. Pennsylvanians should have their vaccination records available when they call to make an appointment. A parent or legal guardian must accompany a child receiving immunizations.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recognizes August as [National Immunization Awareness Month \(NIAM\)](#). This annual observance highlights the importance of getting recommended vaccines. Whether children are homeschooled or attend a public, private, charter or religious school, state laws require they stay up to date for certain vaccinations based on their age, as recommended by the CDC.

Additional information on immunizations can be found on the Pennsylvania Department of Health's website at [health.pa.gov](http://health.pa.gov).

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