

# STATE OF CONNECTICUT

## DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Deidre S. Gifford, MD, MPH  
Acting Commissioner



Ned Lamont  
Governor  
Susan Bysiewicz  
Lt. Governor

June 17, 2020

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

Even as the Covid-19 pandemic continues, immunizations remain critical in protecting students from vaccine preventable diseases. The purpose of this letter is to underscore the need for all students to be up to date on their immunizations when school starts in the fall of 2020.

The Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in sharp declines in outpatient pediatric visits and fewer vaccine doses being administered, leaving children at risk for vaccine-preventable diseases. The Connecticut Immunization Program surveyed pediatric vaccine providers to determine whether a grace period should be considered for immunization required for the start of school this fall. Based on the responses from the survey and from discussions with other state and federal partners, the Immunization Program has decided that it is in the best interest of all students to be up to date on their immunizations for the start of school, and that catch up of children who are overdue for vaccines is logistically feasible.

Ensuring that immunization services are maintained or reinitiated is essential for protecting students and communities from vaccine-preventable diseases and outbreaks and reducing the burden of respiratory illness during the upcoming influenza season. If parents and/or caregivers express concerns about potentially exposing their children to COVID-19 during healthcare visits, they may be reassured to know that many healthcare providers have made changes to routine immunization services to deliver vaccines more safely by minimizing the chance of exposures to ill children during immunization visits. Parents or caregivers of students who are in need of immunizations should contact their primary care physician, community health center, local health department, or school-based health center to schedule a visit, and discuss any concerns they may have with their healthcare providers.

Additionally, beginning July 1<sup>st</sup>, the State Immunization Program will be providing influenza vaccine to all children at no cost regardless of insurance status through age 18. Influenza vaccine is expected to begin arriving during August, and the Immunization Program is encouraging healthcare providers to begin vaccinating as soon as possible. This fall more than ever it is imperative that students and staff receive influenza vaccine. Infectious disease experts have warned of influenza and covid-19 circulating simultaneously this winter, which raises



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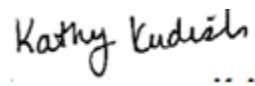


concern that healthcare resources could once again be overwhelmed. Influenza vaccine is one of the greatest tools we have to minimize the impact of this double threat.

At the end of this letter are some helpful links about the delivery of immunization services during Covid-19. 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,

Handwritten signature of Kathy Kudish in black ink, with three dots below it.

Kathy Kudish, DVM, MSPH  
Immunization Program Manager and Deputy State Public Health Veterinarian

- A collection of federal resources designed to guide safe vaccine planning during Covid-19: <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/pandemic-guidance/index.html> (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
- Guidance on Providing Pediatric Well-Care During COVID-19: <https://services.aap.org/en/pages/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-infections/clinical-guidance/guidance-on-providing-pediatric-well-care-during-covid-19/> (American Academy of Pediatrics)