



## 2021 Policy Priorities

Immunize Colorado works to protect Colorado families, schools and communities from vaccine-preventable diseases. To fulfill this mission, Immunize Colorado works with health care providers, public health departments, businesses, policy makers and community organizations across the state. By focusing on six key program areas – coalition building, community outreach, provider education, free and low-cost vaccines, data translation, and public policy – Immunize Colorado leverages the strengths and resources of our coalition members and community partners to maximize the effectiveness of our efforts.

Immunize Colorado engages stakeholders in immunization policy through its Policy Committee which meets monthly to advance proven, common-sense public policy solutions to help ensure safer schools, child care centers and communities through vaccination. Additionally, in 2020, Immunize Colorado launched the Colorado Vaccine Equity Taskforce which houses a policy workgroup focused specifically on applying an equity lens to vaccine policy, especially through the implementation of a vaccine against COVID-19.

**Immunize Colorado’s Policy Committee recommends actively supporting legislation and policy implementation in 2021 which promote both routine vaccination and the implementation and delivery of the new vaccine against COVID-19 through the following policy issues.** This document was approved by the Immunize Colorado Board of Directors on January 21, 2021 with the understanding that Immunize Colorado will work with its Policy Committee members and other partners to advance these issues in our state. These issues are specific to 2021 and should be considered part of Immunize Colorado’s broader, long-term policy agenda.

### **POLICY ISSUE:** Support the full implementation of Colorado Senate Bill 20-163 and maintain current immunization policy

As a founding member of the Colorado Vaccinates coalition in 2019, Immunize Colorado supported the passage of Colorado Senate Bill 20-163 during the 2020 state legislative session. This long-awaited, common-sense policy solution to Colorado’s low immunization rates is even more important now as our communities face the impacts of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. **To help meet Colorado’s vaccination goals and to best protect our communities, the provisions of SB20-163 should be fully enacted and current, evidence-based immunization policies should be preserved.**

In November 2020, the Colorado Board of Health adopted updated language which aligns *Colorado Board of Health Rule 6 CCR 1009-2: The Infant Immunization Program and Immunization of Students Attending School* with many of the directives outlined in statute from SB20-163. To support the full implementation of the law, Immunize Colorado and partners will work to ensure that 1) immunization and exemption data will be submitted to the Colorado Immunization Information System (CIIS) by all immunizing providers and 2) that an annual evaluation of state immunization practices takes place, in line with the entirety of SB20-163.

Additionally, Immunize Colorado recognizes that the COVID-19 pandemic could result in legislative and rulemaking attempts to change immunization policy. The importance of strong, evidence-based immunization policy is clearer now than ever. Immunize Colorado commits to both the implementation of SB20-163 as well as defending against attempts which may weaken immunization access, education or reporting.

### **POLICY ISSUE: Maintain school immunization requirements throughout online and distance learning**

Vaccination requirements for school entry are important tools for maintaining high vaccination coverage rates and, in turn, lower rates of dangerous and costly diseases. **Vaccine requirements for the 2020-21 school year are still in place, even for students who attend school online.** Especially as communities fight COVID-19, maintaining high vaccination coverage is critical to keeping students safe and preventing additional outbreaks of disease that could impact students' learning and further overwhelm our healthcare systems. Immunize Colorado supports the continuation of school immunization requirements, regardless of the format in which learning takes place, in order to protect communities from vaccine-preventable diseases and as a way to keep families and children up to date on vaccinations and well-child checkups.

### **POLICY ISSUE: Ensure strong budget and capacity for the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment's immunization program and local public health agencies**

The response efforts required to mitigate the COVID-19 pandemic has severely limited public health's ability to maintain delivery of preventative services, such as immunizations, a scale comparable to prior to the pandemic. Additionally, stay-at-home orders and subsequent catch-up have limited access to routine primary care services in medical home settings. As a result, Colorado immunization delivery in 2020 has decreased significantly compared to the prior year. **Colorado's public health system must be appropriately funded in order to support ongoing, routine immunization services and to prepare for the robust delivery of a vaccine against COVID-19.**

Immunize Colorado supports the funding increase to Colorado's public health system provided through the 2020 special session and looks forward to supporting public health activities in 2021 that promote access to vaccination and enhancing the public health workforce.

Additionally, as described in the policy issue above, the Colorado Immunization Information System (CIIS) is a crucial tool for addressing gaps in vaccination coverage and will be critical in the efficient delivery of a vaccine against COVID-19. As part of public health funding, CIIS should be properly staffed and funded to adequately meet the unprecedented needs of the ongoing COVID-19 crisis.

### **POLICY ISSUE: Incorporate health equity into Colorado's vaccination policy and delivery**

The COVID-19 pandemic has not only highlighted the existing inequities in our healthcare system but has also deepened those inequities. **Prioritizing equity when addressing existing gaps in immunization coverage and the delivery of the vaccine against COVID-19 is an opportunity for all public health partners.**

Through the launch of the Colorado Vaccine Equity Taskforce, Immunize Colorado seeks to place equity at the forefront of vaccine policy, delivery and communications, especially as our state works through the implementation of a vaccine against COVID-19. This taskforce and the strength within its membership will help ensure concepts of equity throughout Colorado's immunization policies.

### **POLICY ISSUE: Ensure the delivery of a safe and effective vaccine against COVID-19 for Coloradans**

The development of a COVID-19 vaccine has long been considered the primary way in which our communities and economy will recover from the pandemic. **Given the personal impacts of the pandemic, Coloradans deserve to have access to a safe and effective vaccine against COVID-19 once it is available and should understand why, when, where and how they will access the vaccine.**

In addition to the above policy priorities, Immunize Colorado has issued a position statement on the development, allocation, administration and acceptance of a COVID-19 vaccine. For further detail and to review the full position statement, please [visit our website](#).