



2022-23 Policy Priorities of Immunize Colorado and the Colorado Vaccine Equity Taskforce (CVET)

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 (CVET) 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.

The joint Policy Committee of Immunize Colorado and the Colorado Vaccine Equity Taskforce recommends actively supporting legislation and policy implementation in 2022-23 which promote routine vaccination through the following policy issues. This document was approved by the Immunize Colorado Board of Directors on July 21, 2022, and by the CVET on August 4, 2022 with the understanding that Immunize Colorado and CVET will work with the Policy Committee members and other partners to advance these issues in our state. These issues are specific to the 2022-23 legislative sessions and should be considered part of Immunize Colorado's broader, long-term policy agenda.

POLICY ISSUE: [Review the implementation and impact of Colorado Senate Bill 20-163, School Entry Immunizations, which was passed into law in 2020](#)

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 vaccination rates have dropped to concerning levels due to the COVID-19 pandemic. **To help meet Colorado's vaccination goals and to best protect our communities, the implemented components of**

SB20-163 should be evaluated for their impact and effectiveness, and the Policy Committee should advocate for meaningful implementation of the law's components that have not yet been addressed.

Specifically, Immunize Colorado and CVET wish to understand the impact of the law on school health care workers and health care providers to determine what has been successful and where support and resources may be needed. Additionally, Immunize Colorado and CVET wish to better understand the status of exemptions being claimed and how they are being claimed to understand any unintended consequences the law may have and lay groundwork if regulatory or policy changes may be needed in the future.

Additionally, Immunize Colorado and CVET recognize that legislative and rulemaking attempts to change immunization policy may occur. 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: Explore strategies to address the recent overall decrease in routine childhood vaccinations

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and its tangential impacts, vaccination rates have dropped for school-age children in Colorado. **Immunize Colorado and CVET are committed to exploring innovative and collaborative strategies for addressing the decrease and helping to improve vaccination rates to pre-pandemic levels.** The organizations are committed to working with the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, local public health agencies, school administrators and school nurses, hospitals, and other partners to consider strategies and policies that will increase vaccine delivery and access, promote vaccine acceptance, and reduce hesitancy and misinformation.

Ensuring easy access to vaccination rate data for all kids and being able to share this information with policymakers and partners is critical. Also critical will be supporting school and child care staff in reporting their institution's vaccination rates to ensure reliable data on a year-to-year basis.

POLICY ISSUE: Explore nontraditional strategies for delivering COVID-19 and routine immunizations to BIPOC and other underserved communities

The COVID-19 pandemic has not only highlighted the existing inequities in our healthcare system but has also deepened those inequities. The COVID-19 vaccine rollout process has demonstrated inequities in our vaccine delivery systems and the need to reach communities in flexible and creative ways—to meet communities at locations they already frequent and are comfortable being, at times that are convenient to them. **When addressing existing gaps in immunization coverage, priority should be placed on implementing and sustaining nontraditional vaccine delivery and access systems for both COVID-19 and routine vaccinations.**

Through continued action by the CVET, Immunize Colorado seeks to place equity at the forefront of vaccine access. This taskforce and the strength within its membership will help ensure concepts of equity throughout Colorado's immunization policies.