

# IMMUNIZATION

## in Colorado Schools (Statewide), 2019-2020



### Overview

Vaccines are a safe and effective way to prevent the spread of serious disease and keep children healthy as they grow. For each birth cohort vaccinated in the U.S. per the recommended schedule, vaccines save 33,000 lives, prevent 14 million cases of disease, and save \$9.9 billion in direct healthcare costs.

All students and school staff deserve a healthy school environment that supports their wellbeing and builds a strong foundation for learning. It takes an entire community to protect against serious disease. Because diseases such as measles can spread rapidly, adequate vaccination coverage at the school level -- roughly 95% for each vaccine -- helps to protect the health of students, staff and others in the community, including those who cannot be vaccinated for medical reasons or because they are still too young to receive vaccines. This is known as herd immunity or community protection.

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.

### Did You Know?



**91%** of Colorado kindergarteners were vaccinated for MMR in 2019-20, an increase of 3.7% from the previous year.



**10,872** Colorado kids were hospitalized or went to an emergency room with vaccine-preventable diseases in 2018.



**97%** of vaccine exemptions in Colorado are claimed for non-medical reasons.



**30,677** K-12 students entered Colorado schools in 2019-20 without protection from one or more vaccines.

### Why It Matters

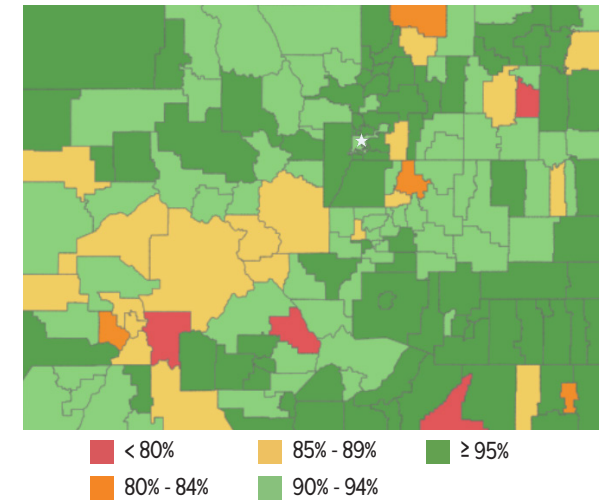
- While the majority of Colorado parents vaccinate, data show there is variation in vaccination coverage across the state. Areas of low vaccination put children -- especially young children -- and communities at risk for outbreaks, which can spread rapidly in school settings.
- State and local vaccination 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.
- Research shows that states with lenient exemption policies, like Colorado, have higher exemption rates, which can lead to increased risk for vaccine-preventable disease outbreaks.
- Low vaccination rates can be an indicator that families may need help understanding which vaccines their children should have and/or where they can conveniently access free or low-cost vaccines. Research shows vaccine hesitancy is generally not a barrier to vaccination among refugee and immigrant students.
- Ensuring high vaccination rates can help keep students in school, reducing absenteeism linked to preventable disease in support of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).
- Research shows that schools with higher vaccination rates are more likely to have a school nurse supporting immunization efforts.

### Vaccination Reporting Policy

Per Colorado law and Board of Health Rule, all licensed schools and child care centers are required to report their immunization and exemption rate information annually to the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) to be made publicly available online.

To access the school immunization data, visit [covaxrates.org](http://covaxrates.org)

### School District Level Rates of K-12 Children Fully Immunized with MMR, 2019-20



County-level MMR rates range from 58% - 100%.

This information can be viewed for each vaccine on the CDPHE [school immunization data site](http://schoolimmunization.data.site).

### Percentage of All Colorado Schools That Meet Healthy People 2020 Goals for Vaccination Coverage, 2019-20

Vaccine/Disease	All K-12 Schools
MMR (Measles, Mumps, Rubella)	61%
Varicella (Chickenpox)	53%
DTaP (Diphtheria, Tetanus, Pertussis)	69%
HepB (Hepatitis B)	63%
Polio	58%
*Tdap (Tetanus, Diphtheria, Pertussis)	71%

National Healthy People 2020 (HP 2020) goals are to reach 95% coverage for each vaccine (\*except Tdap, which is 80%).

# IMMUNIZATION

## in Gunnison Watershed School District RE1J, 2019-2020



### How Is My District Doing?\*

Total school district enrollment: 2,037 students

- The percent of students in Gunnison Watershed School District fully immunized for each vaccine ranges from 85% - 89% depending on the specific vaccine.
- Exemption rates for any vaccine range from 3.5% - 36.2% across individual schools, demonstrating high variability among schools within the district.
- Depending on the vaccine, between 162 and 207 students in Gunnison Watershed School District claimed an exemption.
- Depending on the vaccine, between 37 and 68 students in Gunnison Watershed School District have an incomplete or missing record.

### What Does This Mean for Our Schools?

Vaccination is important to emergency response efforts and helps to prevent absenteeism, exclusions, and other societal and economic costs.

In the event of an outbreak, your school may be required to take measures to protect the student population or larger community, such as excluding students. These lost days of school have impacts on a student's education and long-term success. Maintaining high immunization coverage, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, is an important tool for keeping students healthy and in school.

#### Case in Point:

Recent Colorado and national cases and outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases like measles, mumps, influenza, hepatitis A, whooping cough and chickenpox highlight the importance of ensuring the children in Gunnison Watershed School District are fully immunized so that they, and the entire community around them, are protected from serious illness.

\*These data include both public and private schools that reported data.

†These data include the following school-required vaccines: HepB, MMR, DTaP, Polio, and Varicella.

Percentage of Gunnison Watershed School District Students Fully Immunized By Vaccine, 2019-20\*

Disease/Vaccine	Fully Immunized
Measles/ MMR	88%
Mumps/ MMR	88%
Rubella/ MMR	88%
Pertussis (Whooping Cough)/ DTaP	89%
Diphtheria/ DTaP	89%
Polio/ IPV	87%
Varicella (Chickenpox)/ VAR	85%

These levels of risk were determined using herd immunity thresholds for each disease in combination with the HP 2020 goals of 95%.

- Low Risk of Outbreak
- Moderate Risk of Outbreak
- High Risk of Outbreak

To explore your district's data using online dashboards and to access related resources and references, visit

[coschooliz.org](https://coschooliz.org)

### What We Can Do Together



**REMINDE** students, families and staff of the importance of on-time vaccination, school vaccine requirements (especially during COVID-19) and additional CDC recommended vaccines such as flu.



**BUILD RELATIONSHIPS** between school administrators, school nurses and local public health to meet state vaccination requirements.



**PARTNER** with other stakeholders to identify opportunities to deliver and/or improve access to vaccines for students, such as supporting school-based health centers and vaccination clinics.



**SEEK SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE** from your local public health agency and CDPHE regarding communicable disease control protocol.



**STAY INFORMED** of science-based immunization information, as well as what's happening with vaccine coverage rates and outbreaks in your community and beyond. Vaccine-preventable disease can spread quickly across regions.



**ENCOURAGE** families to provide accurate vaccination records rather than claim an exemption out of convenience. Assist families in locating their child's record.



**SUPPORT POLICIES** that help families access vaccines and ensure appropriate funding for school nurses and resources that save time and money for schools, such as the Colorado Immunization Information System (CIIS).

**Senate Bill 163**, passed into law in 2020, will be fully implemented in 2021 and will change the process for claiming a non-medical exemption. [Learn more.](#)