



## **BOARD OF HEALTH**

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### **Johnson County Board of Health Position Statement on Immunizations**

The Johnson County Board of Health (JCBOH) supports timely and complete immunization of all infants, children, adolescents, and adults throughout life to provide a lifetime of protection from vaccine preventable diseases.

For the several years childhood immunization rates in Iowa have been rising, but due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, routine childhood and adolescent vaccines were substantially lower during March through May of 2020. While the most recent Iowa Department of Public Health school and childcare audit report notes that rates are consistent with or exceed national averages, pockets of under and un-immunized individuals leave themselves and their communities vulnerable to vaccine-preventable diseases.

To continue to prevent future vaccine preventable disease outbreaks, health care providers should continue to assess pediatric patients, including adolescents, and contact those who are behind schedule to ensure all are fully vaccinated.

At a time where vaccine confidence is called into question, it is increasingly evident that education and outreach need to continue to occur with the public, parents, and health care professionals to ensure that false claims are disproven with the robust body medical literature.

Information provided by the Iowa Public Health Association states vaccine preventable diseases cause long-term illness, hospitalization and death. Annually in the U.S., an average of 200,000 people are hospitalized due to influenza, 800,000 to 1.4 million suffer from chronic hepatitis B infections, and 14 million become newly infected with Human Papillomavirus. High vaccination coverage is an important tool for reducing disease and reduces the societal cost burden associated with these diseases. For example, the U.S. spends nearly \$27 billion annually treating four vaccine-preventable diseases in adults over the age of 50: influenza, pertussis, pneumococcal disease, and shingles. Vaccine preventable disease remains a societal threat due to the lack of vaccination.

JCBOH supports Johnson County health care providers as trusted leaders for immunization and encourages the continued efforts to promote routine vaccinations from birth throughout adulthood to protect individuals and the community and to preserve herd immunity.

JCBOH recommends the following actions to providers and community members to promote a more comprehensive and integrated approach to immunizations across the lifespan to protect oneself and those who currently remain under-immunized or too immune-compromised to be vaccinated:

## *A community where all can achieve optimal health*

### Access

- Ensure access to timely immunizations for all children
- Encourage provider participation in the Vaccines for Children program

### Education

- Make strong recommendations to patients to be vaccinated and be ready to answer any questions
- Refer parent or patient concerns to the physician in your office or your ‘Vaccine Champion’ and address concerns in a non-confrontational way
- Distribute the accurate and thorough CDC Vaccine Information Statements (VIS) for each recommended vaccine to parents and caregivers at every immunization encounter
- Empower parents and caregivers to critically evaluate vaccine information and misinformation
- Serve as immunization experts to your community
- Encourage participation and support for Iowa Immunizes, the state’s vaccine coalition

### Practice Management

- Discuss with your team your practice’s vaccine communication plan so everyone is aware of their role in communication about the importance of vaccines and vaccine safety
- Consider every health care encounter as a means to review immunization records utilizing Iowa’s Immunization Registry Information System (IRIS)
- Incorporate changes in immunization policies, recommendations, and practices in their practice and community by remaining knowledgeable through educational programs, evidence based research, and peer reviewed journals
- Utilize best practices to increase vaccination rates such as: reminder or recall systems, provider prompts, standing orders, and scheduling return visits
- Utilize quality improvement principles to evaluate immunization practices to improve vaccination rates

### Patient Safety

- Recommend that parents, caregivers, and other adults remain compliant with recommended immunizations for their age and risk group in order to protect children in their care
- Ensure adherence to immunization schedules by utilizing electronic health records, the state vaccine registry (IRIS), and recall systems
- Help the families of children who have debilitating sequelae after the administration of vaccines to access the National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program to assist with their ongoing care
- Report adverse vaccine reactions to the Vaccine Adverse Reporting System

Immunizations are a safe and effective public health intervention which protects your family, friends, and the community.

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Reviewed and Approved: