



## **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.

Immunization rates in Iowa have been decreasing since 2020. While the most recent Iowa Health and Human Services 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 the immunization status of pediatric patients, including adolescents, and urge those who are behind schedule to become fully vaccinated.

At a time when 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 of medical literature.

Information provided by the CDC states that vaccination can prevent long-term illness, hospitalization and death. Routine childhood vaccinations given between 1994 and 2023 will have prevented approximately 32 million hospitalizations and over 1 million deaths. This has saved approximately \$540 billion in direct healthcare costs and over \$2 trillion in societal costs. Additionally, high vaccination coverage is an important tool for reducing the population at risk for diseases that are on the rise in the United States, including measles, pertussis, and mpox. 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 a physician or a ‘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
- Recommend that patients who decline immunization for non-medical reasons be educated and advised on the health risks of not being fully vaccinated and consider implementing documentation forms that include the reasons for their refusal for inclusion in their medical records.

### Patient Safety

- Recommend that parents, caregivers, and other adults remain compliant with recommended immunizations for their age and risk group 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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