



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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**Minnesota Groups Encourage Parents to Include
Vaccinations on Their Back-to-School Checklists**

August is National Immunization Awareness Month

Minneapolis, Minn. – According to the Minnesota Department of Health, childhood immunization rates in Minnesota have remained stagnant over the last several years. A coalition of nine Minnesota organizations hopes 2016 will be a year of improvement.

With National Immunization Awareness Month beginning Monday, August 1, the groups are uniting to encourage Minnesota families to make sure their kids are up to date on all recommended vaccines before the new school year begins. The coalition (listed below) includes medical professionals, parents, immunization advocates, and public health advocates.

“Getting vaccinated is one of the most important things parents can do to protect their children’s health,” said Karen Ernst of the Minnesota Childhood Immunization Coalition. “On behalf of the thousands of Minnesotans who have been touched by vaccine-preventable diseases, I hope parents will check their kids’ vaccination records to make sure they’re ready for a healthy school year.”

Vaccines protect against a number of serious and potentially life-threatening diseases. When children are not vaccinated, they are at risk for diseases that can spread to others in their classrooms and communities – including babies who are too young to be fully vaccinated and people with weakened immune systems.

“The measles outbreak that began at Disneyland in 2015 was a perfect example of how quickly infectious diseases can spread when they reach groups of people who aren’t vaccinated,” said Patsy Stinchfield, pediatric nurse practitioner for Children's Hospitals and Clinics of Minnesota. “Parents should take advantage of any clinic visit – checkups, sick visits, or physicals – to ask about what vaccinations their children need.”

Minnesota organizations teaming up for National Immunization Awareness Month include [Children’s Health Network](#), [Immunization Action Coalition](#), [Minnesota Academy of Family Physicians](#), [Minnesota Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics](#), [Minnesota Childhood Immunization Coalition](#), [Minnesota Head Start Association](#), [Minnesota Medical Association](#),

[Minnesota Chapter of the National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners](#), and the [School Nurse Organization of Minnesota](#).

Families who need help paying for vaccines should ask their health care professional about the [Minnesota Vaccines for Children program](#), which provides vaccines at no cost to eligible children who do not otherwise have access to immunization.

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