



COLORADO

Governor Jared Polis

B 2019 006

EXECUTIVE ORDER

Immediate Support for Programs and Policies to Increase State Immunization Rates

Pursuant to the authority vested in the Governor of the State of Colorado and, in particular, pursuant to Article IV, Section 2 of the Colorado Constitution, I, Jared Polis, Governor of the State of Colorado, hereby issue this Executive Order supporting programs and policies that will increase the State’s immunization rates and honor the rights of parents.

I. Background and Purpose

Vaccines are considered one of the greatest public health achievements of the 20th century, and they play a very important role in keeping us healthy. We are also a state that supports the right of our residents to make their own healthcare decisions. Diseases that used to be common and sometimes fatal in the United States and around the world, such as polio, measles, whooping cough, influenza, hepatitis and rotavirus, can now be prevented by vaccination. In addition to keeping citizens healthy, when parents choose to vaccinate it saves people money on healthcare. One study showed that the cost of childhood vaccinations are far offset by medical cost savings from avoided disease, with an annual net savings of \$267 per person per year. In 2017, 9,424 Colorado children were treated for vaccine-preventable illnesses through hospitalization or emergency department (ED) visits; one of those children died. Hospital and Emergency Room charges to treat vaccine-preventable disease in Colorado children totaled more than \$55 million.

While the United States has made significant progress toward eliminating vaccine-preventable diseases among children, the level of non-medically indicated reluctance or refusal to vaccinate, including for reasons of lack of convenient access – despite general availability of vaccines – threatens to reverse progress made in tackling vaccine-preventable diseases. This is why the World Health Organization listed “vaccine hesitancy” as one of the ten greatest threats to global health in 2019.¹ Nationally, vaccine hesitancy has resulted in significant outbreaks of preventable diseases. As of June 6, 2019, 1022 cases of measles have been confirmed in 28 states. This is the greatest number of cases reported in the United States since 1992 and since measles was declared eliminated in 2000.² Because diseases such as measles can spread rapidly, adequate immunization coverage in schools helps to protect the health of students, staff, and

¹Ten threats to global health in 2019. World Health Organization. <https://www.who.int/emergencies/ten-threats-to-global-health-in-2019>.

² CDC. Measles Cases and Outbreaks. <https://www.cdc.gov/measles/cases-outbreaks.html>. Accessed June 3, 2019.



others in the community, including people who cannot be vaccinated for medical reasons or because they are too young to have received all recommended vaccines.

Colorado continues to rank at the bottom of immunization coverage rates in the United States. For the 2018-19 school year, Colorado's kindergarten coverage rate for measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) was 87.4%, well below the 92 - 94% community immunity threshold needed for protection against measles.³ This kindergarten coverage rate reflects a 1.3% decrease from the 2017-18 school year where Colorado ranked as the last state in the nation. In 2018-19, 4.5% of kindergartners claimed an exemption for the MMR vaccine.

Addressing low vaccination rates and high exemption rates requires a multifaceted approach, including utilizing data better in the Colorado Immunization Information System (CIIS) with consistent exemption policies, outreach to vaccine-hesitant parents and guardians, more effective conversations between healthcare providers and parents, and increased access to vaccines, especially in rural areas and communities with limited access to health care providers. These steps are consistent with the goals of Colorado's Health Care Road Map and can improve immunization rates, keep people healthy, and save people money on healthcare.

II. Declarations and Directives

Recognizing the importance of increasing Colorado's kindergarten immunization coverage rates, I hereby direct the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) to take immediate action to:

- A. Work with communities with low immunization rates to determine root causes, identify local strategies, and provide educational information about vaccines;
- B. Propose to the State Board of Health the increased use of standardized, easy-to-print medical and non-medical exemption forms;
- C. Propose to the State Board of Health that it consider better alignment of Colorado immunization practices with national best practices guidelines recommended by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices;
- D. Further study the views of parents, and develop and annually implement a public education and outreach campaign to address vaccine hesitancy and access issues, subject to available funds;
- E. Develop and implement a public health education program to support immunization providers' efforts towards increasing immunization coverage, subject to available funds. The program should seek to influence clinical practices

³ Orenstein W., Seib, K. Mounting a Good Offense against Measles. <https://www.nejm.org/doi/10.1056/NEJMp1408696>.

through tailored visits and the use of evidence-based, well-established, and successful strategies to deliver training and technical assistance to health care providers to help them implement best practices;

- F. More widely disseminate K-12, and child care facility specific vaccination and exemption rates annually;
- G. Educate emancipated adolescents 15 years and older regarding their right to consent to vaccines in accordance with C.R.S. § 13-22-103;
- H. Study the potential impact of local immunization drives, school- or community center-located vaccination clinics and mobile immunization services on vaccination rates; and
- I. Report to me on progress made on implementation of this Executive Order no later than June 18, 2020, and every 6 months thereafter.

To assist CDPHE in the State's efforts to address vaccine hesitancy and increase Colorado's kindergarten immunization coverage rates, I hereby direct relevant state agencies as follows:

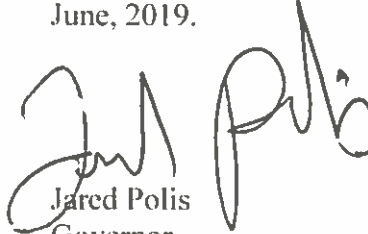
- A. HCPF shall implement a policy that incentivizes Medicaid Primary Care Medical Providers (PCMPs) to participate in the Vaccines for Children program to improve vaccine access in underserved areas; and
- B. HCPF and CDPHE shall study the feasibility of both implementing a Two-Generation approach to vaccination within the Medicaid population, and requiring PCMPs to submit their immunization and medical exemption data to CIIS.

III. Duration

This Executive Order shall remain in effect unless modified or rescinded by future Executive Order of the Governor.



GIVEN under my hand and the Executive Seal of the State of Colorado, this thirteenth day of June, 2019.


Jared Polis
Governor