

MEMORANDUM

TO: School Principals and Leadership
FROM: IDPH Immunization Section
DATE: March 24, 2025

RE: **Improving Measles Protection Rates and Evaluation of Outbreak Readiness**

The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) Immunization Section requests your immediate action to help avoid a measles outbreak in your school. ***Schools with measles protection rates below the 96% Community Immunity Threshold (CIT) will receive an additional communication. We are providing critical resources in this document in the form of:***

- ***The [Illinois School Vaccination Coverage Dashboard](#)***
- ***Critical action steps to minimize spread of infections in schools***
- ***Access to enroll in [ICARE](#) (the State Immunization Registry)***

Background

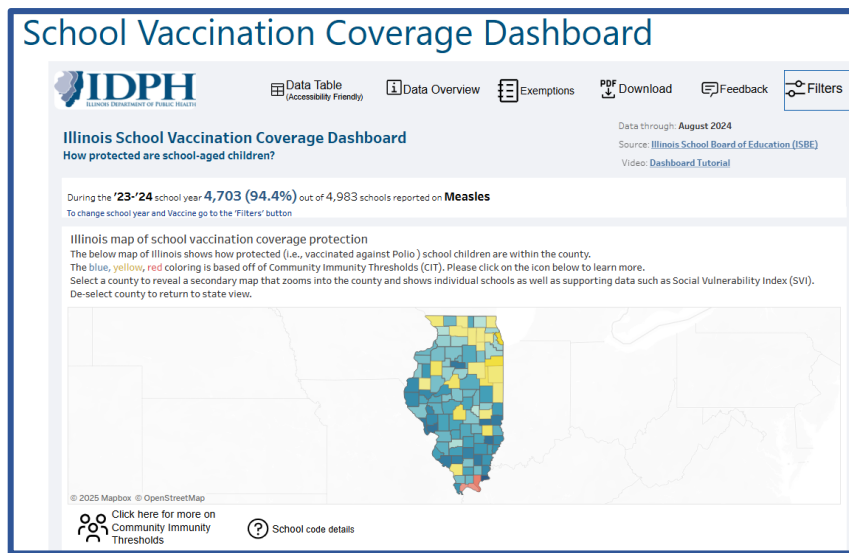
In recent years, vaccination rates have declined at many schools across Illinois especially for highly contagious and dangerous diseases like measles. About 90% of people who are not immune to measles (either through vaccination or previous infection) become infected if exposed to the virus. Measles can cause severe illness such as lung and brain infections and even death, not to mention a rare form of long-term severe brain damage in survivors. The US is experiencing an unprecedented surge in measles. As of March 20, 2025, a total of 378 confirmed measles cases were reported by 18 jurisdictions: Alaska, California, Florida, Georgia, Kansas, Kentucky, Maryland, Michigan, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York City, New York State, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Texas, Vermont, and Washington.

While there have been only 3 outbreaks (defined as 3 or more related cases) reported in 2025, the measles cases in Texas and New Mexico alone have already surpassed the total U.S. cases from 2024.

This is a grave concern for Illinois given our downward trending vaccination rates in schools and we request your help in addressing this with some action items that are outlined below.

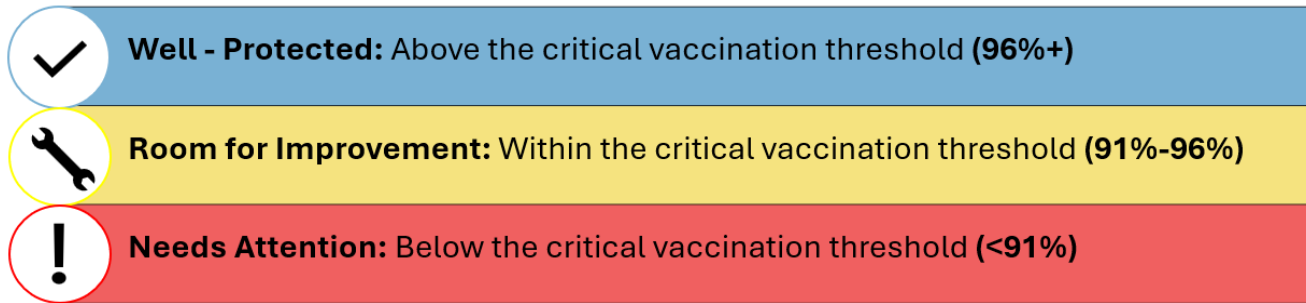
Illinois School Vaccination Coverage Dashboard

This dashboard offers a detailed look at vaccination coverage for measles and other vaccine-preventable diseases based on data your district reported to the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) for the 2023-2024 academic year. Your school's vaccination rates fall below this 96% threshold and action is needed to improve protection for students and the school community. Please refer to the [Illinois School Vaccination Coverage Dashboard](#) to review your school's vaccination coverage rates specifically for Measles. Below is a snapshot of the dashboard. IDPH has also produced this [Video Tutorial on how to navigate the dashboard and has published a How to User Guide that](#) is attached to this communication.



COMMUNITY IMMUNITY THRESHOLDS (CITS)

Under the [Student Health Examination and Immunization Code](#), IDPH requires students to be vaccinated to protect themselves, classmates, and staff. Vaccination directly shields individuals and helps contain disease spread, especially for those who are ineligible for certain vaccines. To maintain community immunity, schools should aim for 96% coverage, with a minimum of 91% to achieve herd immunity.



Community immunity occurs when a percentage of a population becomes immune to an infection, reducing the risk of infection, especially for those who lack immunity. The safest way for immunity or protection from measles is vaccination. **A higher number of people vaccinated in an area helps prevent outbreaks and keep infection rates low.** The Community Immunity Thresholds (CITs) are determined based on the most up-to-date evidence and structured as follows:

Blue: Above the critical vaccination threshold (96%+) signifies that an adequate percentage of the population is vaccinated to control the spread of infection.

Yellow: Within critical vaccination threshold (91%-96%) signifies that a percentage of the population is vaccinated but there is room for improvement to ensure there is no spread of infection.

Red: Below the critical vaccination threshold (less than 91%) signifies that the percentage of the population vaccinated is too low to ensure no spread of infection. There is an urgent need for improvement.

CALL TO ACTION

We ask that each school participate in the following action items to help avoid the spread of measles infections in Illinois schools.

1. Review the immunization records of all your students.
 - a. Illinois requires 1 dose of MMR for daycare students aged ≥ 12 months and pre-school aged students, and 2 doses of MMR vaccine for students in grades K through 12, unless they have other presumptive evidence of measles immunity, which includes laboratory evidence of immunity or laboratory confirmation of disease.
 - i. There may be some students who received a dose of MMR at 6-11 months of age. This is considered an extra dose and does not count towards the above MMR immunization requirement. These students must still complete the 2-dose series starting at age 12 months.
 - ii. Some students may have received their second dose of MMR prior to turning 4

years old. As long as the first dose was given at or after 12 months of age and the second dose was given after a minimum of 4 weeks (28 days) from the first dose, **this second dose should be counted as valid for their school requirements.**

- iii. Please note that if the MMRV vaccine was used, the minimum interval between doses of this particular vaccine is 3 months.
2. Keep susceptibility lists by disease category with the names of students and staff who are not fully vaccinated. In the setting of any exposure, those who are not protected (or non-immune to measles) would warrant post exposure prophylaxis with vaccine within 72 hours of exposure, which is why having this information at baseline would be critical to minimize further infections. This would also be needed if students and staff must be excluded from school during an outbreak. This includes students who are not completely vaccinated due to religious exemption, medical exemption, or a McKinney-Vento exception; on an approved schedule; or non-compliant with the measles vaccination.
3. Follow up with students and staff that are not immune to measles. Here are suggested materials to share with families. Remind them of the school's exclusion procedure in case of exposure.
 - a. [MMR \(Measles, Mumps, and Rubella\) VIS What You Need to Know](#) (Current Translations)
 - b. Use family-friendly infographics to communicate with families about measles and MMR through the [AAP | Immunization Discussion Guides](#). Available in English, Korean, Simplified Chinese, Spanish, and Vietnamese.
 - c. [CDC | Measles Isn't Just a Little Rash Infographic](#)
 - d. [Immunize.org | Measles: Questions and Answers](#)
4. Review your school policies and the IDPH Administrative Code Part 690, [Section 690.520 MEASLES, SUSPECT, PROBABLE OR CONFIRMED](#) regarding exclusion of susceptible students and personnel. Remind families of students who are not fully vaccinated of the school's outbreak control exclusion procedure.
5. If you learn of any students with measles in your school, immediately contact the [local health department](#). If unable to reach your LHD, call IDPH at 217-782-2016, or after hours at 217-782-2016, to ensure that control measures are implemented.
6. Advise your school community that vaccines are available in Illinois through publicly funded programs: [Vaccines for Children](#) and Adult Immunization Programs. The [Vaccine Locator Dashboard](#) provides users vaccine availability and directions to provider sites. Consider mobile clinic services when available to increase access. IDPH is planning to support mobile services to

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increase access in targeted areas with low vaccine coverage rates.

ACCESS TO ILLINOIS IMMUNIZATION REGISTRY (I-CARE)

What is I-CARE

I-CARE, or Illinois Comprehensive Automated Immunization Registry Exchange, is a web-based immunization record-sharing application that allows public and private healthcare providers to share the immunization records of Illinois residents with other providers statewide.

How to Enroll in I-CARE

The [I-CARE enrollment website](#) allows you to find tools and resources to complete the following:

- New organizations can complete site enrollments and designate a Portal Registration Authority (PRA).
- Current organizations can report site updates and PRA changes.
- Individuals can request I-CARE Access.

OTHER RESOURCES FOR SCHOOL PERSONNEL

- [IDPH | Measles](#)
- [IDPH | Communicable Disease School Nurse Guidance](#)
- [IDPH | I-CARE Enrollment](#)
- [Illinois Administrative Code Part 665 Child and Student Health Examination and Immunization Code](#)
- [CDC | Measles Cases and Outbreaks](#)
- [CDC | About Measles](#)
- [CDC | Measles Vaccination](#)
- [ICAAP | Immunizations Toolkit for School Leadership](#)
- [ICAAP | School Immunization Resources](#)
- [Preventing, Reporting, Responding, & Managing Measles in Schools, Childcare Centers and WIC Clinics](#), March 2024 Presentation Slides.

CONTACT US FOR MORE INFORMATION

For help, questions, or feedback please contact the IDPH Immunization Section at dph.coveragelevel@illinois.gov or call 217-785-1455 and select option 3.

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