

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**Denver Metro Area Public Health Officials Urge Parents to
Make Sure Kindergartners are Up-to-Date on Vaccinations**

Vaccination Critical to Keep Measles Out of Colorado

Denver, Colo. — In the midst of the largest measles outbreak in the U.S. in nearly three decades, public health officials representing Adams, Arapahoe, Denver, Douglas and Jefferson counties are calling on parents and caregivers to keep measles out of Colorado by making sure kindergartners are vaccinated before school starts.

Colorado's 2018-2019 rate for the measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccine among kindergartners was 87.4 percent, according to the [Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment](#) (CDPHE). In the Denver Metro region, the rate was 89.1 percent. Neither is high enough to protect communities from a measles outbreak.

"These MMR rates need to be higher to ensure measles does not spread across the Denver Metro Area," said Dr. John M. Douglas, Jr., Executive Director at Tri-County Health Department. "Add to that having problems with pockets of children or adults with even lower vaccination rates. That's the recipe for an outbreak to begin and exactly what has happened in other states during 2019."

Kids need two doses of measles-containing vaccine, one at 12-15 months and a second at 4-6 years, to be protected. The second dose is required before kindergarten entry in Colorado.

"The measles vaccine is safe — and it works," said Judy Shlay, MD, Associate Director of Denver Public Health. "Measles can be a very serious illness and is a public safety issue. It's up to all of us to create immunity in our communities and protect others who can't be vaccinated."

There is room for improvement to get more kindergartners vaccinated. In the Denver Metro Area, kindergarten vaccination coverage rates for MMR for the 2018-2019 school year are:

- Adams: 94.1 percent
- Arapahoe: 90.5 percent
- Denver: 85 percent
- Douglas: 86.4 percent
- Jefferson: 90.1 percent

“A new school year already brings lots of emotions for parents, especially those who are sending their little ones off to school for the first time,” said Dr. Margaret J. Huffman, Director of Community Health Services at Jefferson County Public Health. “The last thing they should have to worry about is their child getting a preventable disease like measles.”

Some people think of measles as just a little rash and fever that clears up in a few days, but measles can cause serious health complications like pneumonia and brain infection. In the U.S., one in four people diagnosed with measles is hospitalized.

In preparation for kindergarten entry, parents should find their kid’s vaccination records and see if a vaccine is needed. For more information about vaccinations or to make an appointment at your local health department, please call or visit us online:

- [Denver Public Health](#): 303-602-3520
- [Jefferson County Public Health](#): 303-239-7078
- [Tri-County Health Department](#): 303-451-0123

CDPHE also has many resources to help parents and caregivers make informed choices about vaccinating their children:

- [SpreadTheVaxFacts.com](#) guides people through information and misinformation about vaccines with advice from Colorado doctors who also are parents.
- [COVax4Kids.org](#) helps people find out if their kids are eligible for low- or no-cost vaccines and helps them find a provider who gives them.
- [COVaxRecords.org](#) lets people know how to request vaccination records for their children.
- [COVaxRates.org](#) makes it easy for people to look up vaccination and exemption rates for schools and child care facilities in Colorado so they can make the best decision for their children.

About Denver Public Health

[Denver Public Health](#) provides a wide range of services that evaluate, promote and protect the health and well-being of the residents of Denver and beyond. Denver Public Health monitors the health of Denver and responds to disease outbreaks and other emergencies, as well as works with many partners to prevent health problems by decreasing injury, preventing tobacco-related illnesses and promoting health eating and active living. Clinical services include: STD screening and treatment, family planning, immunizations, tuberculosis screening and care, birth and death records and HIV/AIDS care.

About Jefferson County Public Health

Public health is what we as a society do collectively to prevent illness and premature death and promote health in our neighborhoods and communities. Jefferson County Public Health (JCPH) is a nationally accredited health department committed to promoting and protecting health across the lifespan for all people through prevention, education and partnerships. To learn more about JCPH, visit www.jeffco.us/public-health. You can also follow JCPH on Twitter [@JeffcoPH](#), Instagram [@JeffcoPH](#) and Facebook [@jeffcopublichealth](#).

About Tri-County Health Department

Tri-County Health Department serves over 1.5 million people in Adams, Arapahoe and Douglas Counties. It provides over 60 programs and services including birth certificates, immunizations, WIC, restaurant inspections, family planning, STI/HIV Testing and infectious disease investigations. For more information, visit www.tchd.org, Twitter [@TCHDHealth](#) or Facebook [@cotchd](#).