

Connecting Point

A MID MICHIGAN DISTRICT HEALTH DEPARTMENT NEWSLETTER



February 2015

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Immunization and New Waiver Guidelines

Measles and Pertussis outbreaks in recent months have brought to light the importance of immunizations in protecting the public's health. In the State of Michigan, parents have had the choice to opt out of immunizations for their children, based on medical or non-medical considerations. Recognizing that waiver rates in Michigan were climbing over the past few years, the Joint Committee on Administrative Rules at the Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH) approved changes to administrative rules related to reporting for schools and child care centers. These rules took effect on January 1, 2015.

Under the old rule, parents/guardians who opposed immunizations based on religious or philosophical reasons, could fill out a non-medical waiver at their child's daycare or school. The new rule requires parents/guardians to speak with health department staff about their immunization questions and concerns prior to the waiver being signed. The parents/guardians are provided with scientific education about the benefits of vaccination and the risks of vaccine-preventable diseases. Schools and daycare centers can now only accept a State of Michigan waiver form that has been certified by the local health department.

Healthcare providers will continue to issue medical waivers for patients who cannot receive certain vaccines due to contraindications or health precautions. However, for non-medical waivers, physicians will now document refusals and refer those patients to the local health department for a non-medical waiver. With these joint efforts, the goal is to decrease the number of school and daycare waivers in Michigan.

The reasons for MDCH implementing the new immunization changes are many, including:

- Rules were modified to reflect changes to the Public Health Code, moving 6th grade reporting requirements to 7th grade.
- Immunization rates in Michigan have stagnated while the rest of the country's rates have gone up.
- Waiver rates have increased in Michigan over the last three years to nearly 7%, with waiver rates reported at 8% for 6th grade students.
- Michigan has the 4th highest waiver rate in the country for kindergarten students.
- Parents/guardians need to make informed decisions for their children and understand the risks of not vaccinating based on scientific information.
- Parents/guardians need to understand the benefits that vaccinations provide for both the individual and the community.
- Waivers rates vary widely across the state by county, from 1.3% to 20.7%.
- Ten counties, which had policies in place where education and informed consent were used as a tool, averaged a waiver rate of 3.3%.

For more information on obtaining non-medical waivers for vaccinations, contact Sarah Doak, RN, at (989) 227-3109 or sdoak@mmdhd.org



Community Health Worker Success

The Pathways to Better Health Program provides Community Health Workers (CHW) who assist at-risk residents in navigating human service systems. This federally-funded program is quickly filling a need throughout the region and has been well received by community partners. Here is an example of how the Pathways Program assists residents:

“One of the latest success stories is amazing. A resident of our district, who is in his forties, was referred to the program as he was uninsured, didn’t have a current primary care provider and was disabled (legally blind), but not getting any benefits. He had been denied disability, so Shelly (CHW) did some investigating and found the reason was lack of information. She obtained the needed paperwork and appealed the denial. As a result, the client is now receiving disability and Shelly is working on getting him additional federal disability benefits. The next priority is to work on getting him stable housing and eyeglasses to improve his activity and daily living.”

For more information about the Pathways to Better Health Program, contact Wendy Currie, RN, at (989) 875-1028 or wcurrie@mmdhd.org

Fluoride Varnish Program

Fluoride varnish is a topical fluoride “painted” on the surface of teeth to help prevent tooth decay. MMDHD’s fluoride varnish program is provided district wide to help prevent cavities in young children. From October 1, 2014 through December 31, 2014, fluoride varnish and oral health screenings were provided through the following programs:

Head Start

- Montcalm, Gratiot, Ionia and Isabella Counties
- 435 oral screenings, with 169 referrals for treatment
- 423 fluoride varnish applications

Women, Infants and Children (WIC)

- Montcalm, Gratiot and Clinton Counties
- 40 oral screenings, with 6 referrals for treatment
- 40 fluoride varnish applications

Great Start Readiness Programs

- Montcalm County only
- 110 oral screenings, with 44 referrals for treatment
- 101 fluoride varnish applications

For more information about the Fluoride Varnish Program, contact: Shelley Treynor, RDH, (989) 831-3621, streynor@mmdhd.org or Jennifer Stratton, RN, (989) 831-3609 or jstratton@mmdhd.org

Clinton Drug Free Communities Grant

MMDHD, in partnership with the Clinton Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition, (CSAPC) has been awarded a Drug Free Communities (DFC) Program grant. This five year grant award for Clinton County will provide CSAPC and MMDHD with a solid foundation to provide valuable substance use prevention programming targeting youth.

CSAPC has maintained its special focus on the prevention of alcohol, tobacco and other drug use by youth and is a vital community force in providing programming that enhances “protective factors” that help youth resist substance use and abuse. Clinton County will receive approximately \$75,000 per year for the next five years because of the DFC program.

The DFC Program funds community coalitions that have formed to address youth substance use. DFC funding can be considered the financial support required to further leverage funding that supports the various strategies a community needs in order to solve its youth substance use problems. The two main goals for DFC are:

- Establish and strengthen collaboration among communities, public and private non-profit agencies, as well as federal, state, local and tribal governments to support the efforts of community coalitions working to prevent and reduce substance abuse among youth.
- Reduce substance use among youth, and over time, reduce substance abuse among adults by addressing the factors in a community that increase the risk of substance abuse and promoting the factors that minimize the risk of substance abuse.

For more information about the Clinton DFC Program, contact:

- Sara Thelen, DFC Coordinator, (989) 227-3140, sthelen@mmdhd.org, or
- Gary Owen, CSAPC Coordinator, (517) 541-8913, gowen@eatonresa.org

For more information about these and other Health Department programs, contact:

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