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MEMORANDUM

TO: Local Health Departments

FROM: IDPH Immunization Section

DATE: June 27, 2011

RE: Recent News Articles related to School Immunization Levels

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In response to a recent article in the Chicago Tribune, <http://www.chicagotribune.com/health/ct-met-vaccination-rates-schools-20110618,0,1261412.story>), and data presented in the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR) earlier this month [http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6021a4.htm?s\\_cid=mm6021a4\\_w#Tab3](http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6021a4.htm?s_cid=mm6021a4_w#Tab3), we would like to remind local health departments of the importance in collaborating with local school districts to maintain high immunization and compliance levels. We recognize that the current reported levels of compliance within schools statewide remain high. However, there are still pockets of either unvaccinated or incompletely vaccinated individuals in schools and communities that contribute to sustained disease transmission.

In addition, a recent CDC Health Advisory regarding the high number of measles cases in the U.S. in 2011 underscores the ongoing risk of importations, the need for high measles vaccine coverage, and the importance of prompt and appropriate public health response to suspect cases. Children and adults who remain unvaccinated and develop measles also put others in their community at risk. For infants too young for routine vaccination (age <12 months), and persons with medical conditions that contraindicate measles immunization, the risk for measles complications is particularly high. These persons depend on high MMR vaccination coverage among those around them to protect them from exposure. In the United States this year, infants aged <12 months accounted for 15% of cases and 15% of hospitalizations. As of last week, 156 measles cases have been reported nationwide. This is more than any year since 1996. Outbreaks and spread of the disease

has been limited due to high 2-dose MMR vaccination coverage and rapid and efficient outbreak control efforts by public health. It is critical that health care providers increase awareness of measles and vaccination among travelers and remain vigilant with the routine the 2-dose series. For measles, even a small decrease in coverage can increase the risk for large outbreaks and endemic transmission, as occurred in the United Kingdom in the past decade.

These news events provide us the opportunity to reinforce the importance of vaccination and to continue the partnerships with schools and local health care providers to prevent classroom outbreaks and assure a healthy environment for all students and their families.

Thank you, in advance, for your cooperation.