

CITY OF BALTIMORE

SHEILA DIXON, Mayor



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Citywide Outreach Effort Targets Unvaccinated Youth

February 12, 2007 -- The Baltimore City Health Department is coordinating a citywide outreach effort to contact the parents or guardians of children who are not up to date with new immunization requirements. These requirements cover the hepatitis B and chickenpox vaccine for grades 5 through 9.

The effort follows an extensive campaign by the Baltimore City Public School System and the Health Department to explain the new requirements and make vaccine available in numerous free clinics. This campaign has reduced the number of children who are out of compliance from more 24,000 to approximately 2,000.

The new effort involves:

- Review of data from the Baltimore City Public School System on children's vaccination status. This review has found that 1,847 children are not up to date with new requirements on hepatitis B vaccine and chicken pox. Another approximately 200 children may not be up to date; their records are under review.
- A door-to-door campaign to contact parents or guardians of children who are not up to date and have not made progress on vaccination. Outreach workers will provide them with the opportunity to sign consent forms for vaccination, with a medical team on stand by for any questions. This door-to-door campaign will be conducted by outreach workers from the city's Housing Department and the School System's truancy center.
- A citywide plan to vaccinate children in school. Once consent forms are signed, children will return to school and be vaccinated in the school nursing suites. This effort will be led by the Health Department's school health program and Bureau of Child Health and Immunization. The Bureau has already vaccinated thousands of children to meet the new immunization requirements.
- Additional communication from the Baltimore City Public School System to parents of youth who are up to date but will eventually need additional shots, so additional children do not fall out of compliance.

It is likely that some of remaining children may have moved out of Baltimore, dropped out of school, or otherwise not be enrolled in the city school system. A secondary objective of this effort is to clarify the status of these children.

It is also likely that some of the families of the children who are out of vaccine compliance have other important social needs. The outreach workers will screen families for interest in assistance with food, energy costs, and other health and other services. Appropriate agencies will then follow up with the families.

“Just as all youth should be immunized against these serious diseases, their families should have access to the support they need,” said Dr. Joshua M. Sharfstein, Health Commissioner. “We are glad to coordinate this effort.”

“Our outreach workers are ready for this challenge,” said Reginald Scriber, Deputy Commissioner of Housing for Community Services. “We know every block of this city.”

“I thank the Health Department and the Housing Department for their assistance,” said Dr. Charlene Cooper-Boston, chief executive officer of the Baltimore City Public School System. “Our shared goal is to help children return to school as quickly as possible.”

City and state leaders also support the effort the multi-agency outreach strategy.

“We appreciate the city’s extensive efforts to ensure that all youth are up to date with important vaccine requirements,” said John M. Colmers, Maryland’s Secretary of Health and Mental Hygiene.

“I am pleased to see city and state agencies coming together to help our city’s children and families,” said Mayor Sheila Dixon.

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