



News Release

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Utah's Immunization Rate Makes Significant Gains

(Salt Lake City, UT) – Utah's state immunization ranking has significantly improved according to the Utah Department of Health and the results of the National Immunization Survey (NIS). The July 7, 2000, Center's for Disease Control's Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR) states that Utah now ranks 22nd in the nation for children 0-2 years of age who are adequately immunized. Utah's 81.7 percent overall rate ranks above the national rate at 79.9 percent. By Kindergarten entry 97 percent of children are fully immunized but the majority of immunizations necessary to effectively prevent infectious diseases must be given during the first two years of life.

"This is wonderful news. I am so pleased that more and more of Utah's children are being safeguarded against disease and disability," said Jacalyn S. Leavitt. "This increase is the result of many dedicated people across the state, including parents who are following through to ensure that their children have a healthy start." The ongoing efforts of a variety of health plans, local health departments, private health care providers, businesses, community coalitions, and the media all contributed to this considerable improvement.

The new and improved ranking is reassuring these efforts that became more aggressive after being ranked dead last in the nation for immunization in 1996; then 42nd in 1998. "We applaud not only those in public health but everyone who made our goal of increased immunization their goal," says Scott Williams, M.D., Deputy Director, Utah Department of Health, "Now that we're close to achieving adequate immunization rates for our children, we need to make sure that we can sustain this success as new children and parents continue to move through this important period of prevention."

To interrupt the outbreak of disease in a community, 90-95 percent of people must be immune. There is still much to be done to sustain, meet or surpass the goal of 90 percent coverage by 2010. Efforts directed toward this goal include developing automated systems that allow providers to send reminder cards and make it easier for parents to keep track of immunization records thus avoiding missed opportunities to vaccinate children. Programs are also being developed to provide ongoing education on current immunization topics for parents and health care providers and to create more convenient access to public and private vaccine immunizations in the private delivery system. There is reason to celebrate, yet still much work to be done. More than 18 percent of our two-year olds remain inadequately immunized, creating the potential for a disease outbreak. For more information on immunization, call the Immunization Hotline at 1-800-275-0659 or see your health care provider.

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