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Allen County Combined Health District

Allen County Board of Health Statement on Vaccination

Adopted March 10, 2017

Vaccination is the process by which individuals are intentionally exposed to an antigen (a substance which activates the body's defense system) in the hope of *immunizing* them, or establishing protection from a given disease should the body encounter it again in the future. Vaccination is one of the greatest public health achievements of the modern era.[1] The introduction of vaccines has helped to dramatically reduce the incidence of vaccine-preventable diseases.[2] There are now 14 vaccine-preventable illnesses for children under 2 years old (see Table 1).[3]

Vaccines offer benefits at both the individual and societal level. Careful monitoring of vaccine safety, both before and after licensure of a vaccine, guides recommendations and ensures that the individual benefits of vaccines outweigh the risks.[4] Adherence to vaccination guidelines is important for individual health, but also impacts a community's health. A key mechanism by which vaccines provide protection is through the process of herd immunity (or community immunity), whereby when the prevalence of immunity to a communicable disease is high enough in a population that even those members of a community who do not have immunity are protected by a firewall of immune individuals.[5] Herd immunity is especially important for those members of a population unable to safely access the benefits of vaccination directly; for example, the very young or those who are immunocompromised. When vaccination rates in a community decline, this important benefit is lost, and communities are left susceptible to disease outbreaks.

Given the central role of vaccination in maintaining the public's health, the Allen County Board of Health resolves the following:

- We affirm the sound research conducted to develop safe and effective vaccination policies. Consistent compliance with these policies will reduce the burden of disease and death, save our communities money, and protect the most vulnerable among us.
- We support evidence-based education of the public on the issue of vaccination. Debates over vaccination policy have been muddied by misinformation. Solid evidence exists on the risks and benefits of vaccination. The public needs to hear more from well-informed experts in this field. Media coverage of this topic should not fall into the "false balance" trap, but should instead clearly present the scientific consensus on the subject: vaccines are safe, effective, and vital to public health.[6]
- We advocate the strengthening of mandatory vaccination policies. While we support medical exemptions, we object to philosophical exemptions given the strong evidence that they erode vaccination rates and may leave our communities susceptible to disease outbreaks. Such policies have proven effective in states like Mississippi and West Virginia.[7]
- We believe that all people, children and adults, should have access to recommended vaccines regardless of their economic or insurance status. We believe that programs that increase access to vaccination, like Vaccines for Children, are a sound investment of public funds and yield strong societal benefits.[8]
- We recognize parental concerns about the number of injections required to meet the current vaccination guidelines. We therefore encourage industry and researchers to continue work on developing combination vaccines to reduce parent burden and simplify the vaccination process.[9]



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Table 1. Vaccine-Preventable Illnesses for Children Under 2.

Chickenpox (Varicella)	Hib	Rotavirus
Diphtheria	Measles	Rubella
Flu (Influenza)	Mumps	Tetanus
Hepatitis A	Polio	Whooping Cough (Pertussis)
Hepatitis B	Pneumococcal	

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- [1] <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/00056803.htm>
[2] <https://medium.com/@visualvaccines/graphic-proof-that-vaccines-work-with-sources-61c199429c8c#.3p2miussj>
[3] <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/parents/diseases/child/index.html>
[4] <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/pubs/pinkbook/safety.html>
[5] <https://www.vaccines.gov/basics/protection/>
[6] <http://www.voicesforvaccines.org/content/uploads/2015/02/False-Balance-Toolkit-VFV.pdf>
[7] https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/storyline/wp/2015/01/30/mississippi-yes-mississippi-has-the-nations-best-child-vaccination-rate-heres-why/?utm_term=.42cecce2541c
[8] <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6316a4.htm>
[9] <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/conversations/downloads/fs-combo-vac.pdf>



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