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**CONTACT:** Megan Yee  
[megan@perrycom.com](mailto:megan@perrycom.com)  
(916) 214-1669

## Whether Schools Hold Distance Learning or Classroom Instruction this Fall, Back-to-School Immunizations are Still Required

*Even limited in-person school instruction and pods put unvaccinated children at risk for highly contagious, preventable diseases*

**(SACRAMENTO, CA)** – While the majority of California schools are gearing up for an online back-to-school session this fall – making returning to the classrooms, for most families, a distant thought – the California Immunization Coalition (CIC) is reminding parents that even students who receive their education through distance learning are still subject to state laws for required immunizations.

“Whether children will be learning at home or wearing masks and practicing social distancing in a classroom or pod organized by parents, they still need timely vaccinations to protect them as stay-at-home orders are lifted,” said Catherine Flores Martin, CIC Executive Director. “We all want to ensure that when in-classroom learning resumes, kids are ready to hit the ground running and protected from other dangerous diseases, like measles and whooping cough.

Since the shelter-in-place order began, vaccination rates have fallen dramatically. State data reported vaccinations were down by more than 50 percent in April compared to April of last year<sup>1</sup>. California health officials are becoming increasingly concerned that the state could be on the precipice of a vaccine-preventable disease outbreak if children and adolescents continue to fall behind on their recommended and required immunizations. If this trend continues, a trend that jeopardizes our state’s public health, California will face a critical gap in vaccinations when students return to classrooms and in-person instruction.

“While vaccinations are required for school entry, we vaccinate children and adolescents based on scientific guidelines and recommendations to protect them from preventable and deadly diseases,” says Pamela Kahn, MPH, RN, President of the California School Nurses Organization. “It’s very easy for these diseases to make a comeback, and that’s what we need to avoid.”

Ensuring that immunizations are given in a timely manner is important to their efficacy.

“Making sure children have their full series of vaccines administered at the right age and on time is the best defense against the spread of highly contagious diseases,” says Yasuko Fukuda, MD FAAP, Chair of the California American Academy of Pediatrics. “Getting behind on vaccination schedules puts children at risk for diseases such as measles, whooping cough or influenza. We want to make sure every child is protected, whether in school, the playground, or in the grocery store.”

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<sup>1</sup> <https://edsources.org/2020/california-immunization-rates-drop-40-percent-during-pandemic/633594>

Flores Martin, on behalf of the CIC, encourages parents to take immediate action.

“Even if your child is receiving instruction at home at this time, your child will need to be protected. Call your doctor or nurse if you delayed your child’s shots due to the pandemic – it’s critical to catch up now and stay on schedule,” she said.

CIC encourages families to visit the following sites for more information and resources to stay up to date on school immunization requirements:

- [Don't Wait Vaccinate](#) – Even under the extreme social distancing orders, visits to doctors’ offices for immunizations are considered essential. Delaying routine immunizations puts families and communities at risk, but it’s not too late to vaccinate.
- [Shots For School](#) – 2020-2021 guide to immunization requirements for school entry (online or in-person)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention – [2020 Childhood Immunization Schedule](#) and [Vaccination Guidance During a Pandemic](#)
- American Academy of Pediatrics – [Healthy Children - Is It OK to Call The Pediatrician During COVID-19?](#)

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***About the California Immunization Coalition***

*The California Immunization Coalition (CIC) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit public-private partnership dedicated to achieving and maintaining full immunization protection for all Californians to promote health and prevent serious illness, disability and death. For more information, please visit [immunizeca.org](http://immunizeca.org) and follow CIC on social media @ImmunizeCA.*