

POLICY BRIEF

Covering Idaho's Kids: Immunizations



IDAHO TACKLES STUBBORN RATES

Over the past few years, Idaho's immunization rates have lagged behind the national average, but the hard work of health care professionals, the Idaho Immunization Program, and district health department staff is beginning to produce results. During the 2004 National Immunization Conference in Nashville, Idaho received an award for the most improved immunization rates in the nation. Idaho's 4:3:1:3:3 immunization rate (DTaP, IPV, MMR, Hep B, and Hib) increased 9% from 2002 to 2003. This rate increase has placed Idaho at 33rd in the nation, the highest ranking since the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention began the National Immunization Survey in 1994. The current 4:3:1:3:3 immunization rate of 78% is only 1% below the national average of 79%. Idaho's increase in immunization rates can be attributed to the efforts of public and private health care providers.

IDAHO'S PROGRAM

The Idaho Immunization Program (IIP) is a comprehensive immunization program that provides services to parents, private providers, and public health care professionals. Some of the services provided by the IIP are:

- Quality Assurance Reviews
- Provider Education
- Parent Education
- Immunization Reminder Information System (IRIS)
- School Assessments

HIGHLIGHTS

Research Shows:

Idaho's current immunization rate is 78%. This is a 9% increase from 2002 to 2003. The current national rate is 79%.

Idaho was awarded the "most improved" immunization state in the nation at the 2004 National Immunization Conference.

Over 19,000 children under the age of 12 months are enrolled in the Immunization Reminder Information System (IRIS). This system accounts for 96% of the annual births in Idaho.

Idaho KIDS COUNT



The IIP performs Quality Assurance Reviews (QAR) with 178 health care clinics that participate with the “Vaccines for Children” program.

KEY ELEMENTS OF QAR:

- **supports health care providers in their efforts to comply with the 17 Standards for Pediatric and Adolescent Immunizations; and updates provider resources**
- **provides immunization education to health care provider staff**
- **performs chart reviews using the Clinic Assessment Software Application (CASA), which produces a report showing individual health care providers/clinics immunization rates**
- **provides a feedback session after each QAR site visit, which enables the IIP to discuss the outcome of the QAR visit and changes needed to bring the office up to national standards. (The IIP has received feedback from private providers and health department staff stating the benefits of QAR visits. These visits have also helped increase the number of providers which meet and exceed the 17 Standards of Pediatrics and Adolescent Immunization.)**

The Immunization Program also holds three statewide immunization conferences (Shot Smarts) and ten local immunization workshops (Booster Shots) each year that provide CME and CEU credit for health care providers. The purpose of these conferences and workshops is to educate providers throughout the state on the most current immunization trends and critical issues. In 2004, these conferences and workshops provided immunization education to over 450 health care providers. Conference presenters include both Immunization Program staff and a nationally recognized immunization expert.

These conferences also have a provider recognition component that acknowledges providers with outstanding immunization practices. The award categories include the “Big Shot” award for the most improved immunization practice or rate in each of the health districts, the “Hot Shot” award which is given to each provider office achieving a 4:3:1:3:3 rate of 90% or better, and the “Immunization Champion” award, which is given to an individual in each health district for their outstanding efforts to raise awareness and increase immunization coverage in Idaho. Each provider office or individual who receives an award is also recognized through a local newspaper advertisement promoting the award and their immunization rate.

The Idaho Immunization Program also works with parents to overcome common misconceptions that they may have regarding immunization. In 2003, the Immunization Program distributed the video, *Vaccines and Your Baby*, to parents of every child born in an Idaho hospital. This video discusses how vaccines work in the body, the importance of immunizations, and common myths regarding vaccines. The Immunization Program also provides health care providers with books, videos, and other educational resources for parents, which are distributed by providers during immunization appointments.

The Immunization Program also sponsors media campaigns during national immunization month and in the fall for back-to-school reminders. These campaigns focus on checking the immunization status of children and the impact immunization has on improving the health of Idaho's children.

IDAHO REMINDER INFORMATION SYSTEM (IRIS)

The Immunization Reminder Information System (IRIS) is becoming a main focus of the Immunization Program. IRIS provides quick and easy access to computerized immunization records of consenting individuals. IRIS is currently utilized by healthcare providers to check the immunization status of patients, account for vaccines, and to forecast future immunization appointments. Childcare programs and schools are also utilizing IRIS to screen immunization records to ensure that students are up to date on immunizations and meet the state requirements for daycare and school entry. Currently, 800 Idaho health care sites, schools and childcare facilities access IRIS. The total number of patients has steadily grown to 228,000, documenting 2.6 million vaccinations. Over 19,000 children under the age of 12 months are enrolled in Idaho's registry, which accounts for 96% of annual births.

School and childcare assessments occur annually and are required by Idaho code as well as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. In addition to recording the immunization levels in Idaho schools and childcare facilities, the Immunization Program offers education to schools and childcare providers in order to increase awareness of immunization requirements. In 2003, the benefits of the Program's childcare facility and school visits was evident as 2003 was the first year Idaho has shown a decrease in the number of students with incomplete or missing records.

By providing education, support, and the necessary resources to health care and childcare providers, schools, and community members, the protection level for vaccine-preventable diseases has dramatically increased--providing Idaho's children with life-long immunity. The Idaho Immunization Program attributes this success to private and public health care providers, who dedicate much of their time and effort to protecting Idaho's children.

EFFECTIVE STRATEGY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Performing Quality Assurance Reviews with health care clinics facilitates compliance with immunization standards**
- **Providing training and education to health care providers increases knowledge about current immunization trends and critical issues.**
- **Providing parent education increases understanding of how vaccines work in the body, why immunizations are important, and dispels common myths about vaccines.**
- **Immunization Reminders Information System (IRIS) provides computerized tracking of immunizations**
- **Conducting school and child care assessments records immunization levels and provides immunization education to school and child care staff.**

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

This information in this publication was compiled and written by Andrew Noble, a health program specialist for the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare's Immunization Program. As a Quality Assurance Specialist, Andrew performs quality assurance reviews with private and public healthcare providers throughout the state of Idaho. In his role as the Education and Outreach Specialist for the Idaho Immunization Program, Andrew also develops educational materials for private and public healthcare professionals, and plans yearly immunization conferences offered by the Idaho Immunization Program.

THE SERIES

"A Closer Look at Idaho's Kids" is covering topics with social and economic implications in our community. The series of publications include relevant data such as national comparisons, trends, key factors and options for change. Each publication is researched and written by local University-based experts. The next publication, slated for December 2004 is titled: Stresses on Idaho Families: Nurturing Father Involvement.

Collectively, this series provides an assessment of the state of Idaho's children with conclusions based upon empirical research, offering policymakers and everyone who cares about Idaho's children some solutions for consideration, as well as options for change. Idaho KIDS COUNT, a Boise-based nonprofit organization and program of Mountain States Group, Inc., provides accurate and relevant data on the well-being of Idaho's children for the purpose of informing, educating, and mobilizing policy makers and citizens to improve conditions for children and families in Idaho.

According to Idaho KIDS COUNT State Director Linda Jensen, the new series provides an opportunity to inform decision makers and the community about two key elements: the underlying or root causes of issues that are negatively impacting Idaho's children; and policies that work to improve our children's lives. "The data contained in this series examines the variables that help us to understand the 'why,' the 'so what' and the potential solutions. We can't effectively solve problems until we fully understand them. I hope this series provides useful information that moves data towards understanding the reasons for the status quo, and motivates action to deliver solutions," says Jensen.

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