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News for Darien

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Kindergarten Immunizations Low at Royle, Ox Ridge Schools, Wide Variations Across Town

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Kindergarten children at Royle and Ox Ridge schools in Darien had so many exemptions to state student vaccination requirements in the last school year that the schools are among 134 across the state that fall below the recommended 95% rate.

At Royle School, the vaccination rate was only 92.6%; at Ox Ridge, 94.7%, according to data for the 2018-2019 school year just released by the state Department of Public Health. Hindley was the only other school in town with some parents who didn't have their children vaccinated, and there the rate was 98.7%

vaccinating. The rate was 100% at Tokeneke and Holmes schools.

The percentage of Kindergarteners with medical or religious exemptions exactly tracks the vaccination rate in Darien schools: add up the vaccination percentage and the exemption percentage, and you get to 100% of kindergarteners in each of the town's five schools.

At Tokeneke and Holmes schools in the same academic year (each with 100% vaccination rates), not one Kindergartener had an exemption. At Hindley, only 1.3% were exempted. (The figure for Royle, 7.4%; Ox Ridge, 5.3%).

"For students to be relatively safe from measles, the CDC guidelines state that at least 95% of kindergarten students in each school need to be vaccinated," the Public Health Department said in an announcement released Monday with the figures for Connecticut schools, including Darien's.

"The data [...] reveal that there are now 134 Connecticut schools where the measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccination rate for kindergarten students falls below the federally recommended guideline of 95%," the announcement said.

"While it is good that state-wide in Connecticut we are still meeting the federally recommended MMR vaccination rate of 95% for kindergarteners, I am very concerned that the number of schools falling short of this important immunization level continues to rise," DPH Commissioner Coleman-Mitchell said in the news release.

Royle and Tokeneke were among the schools with Measles, Mumps and Rubella vaccinations below the 95% guideline. Statistics of the rates for all other vaccinations in Darien schools (including for polio, Hepatitis A and Hepatitis B) were exactly the same.

At Royle School, 1.9 percent of students had an exemption for medical reasons. Royle is the only school in town where there were any. The school also had 5.6% of kindergarteners exempted for religious reasons, the highest rate for any Darien school. All of Ox Ridge's exemptions were religious, as were all of Hindley's.

CORRECTION: The paragraph just above, as originally published, was so wrong in so many ways that we won't even go into details. Now it is corrected. The reason (not an excuse): Lack of sleep. Many apologies. — David Gurliacci

Immunization/Exemption Rates

Health Officials Want Shots for These

The state Health Department tracked all immunizations, but the statistics for each were exactly the same, at least in Darien schools. Nevertheless, this also shows each of the immunizations health officials would like children to have:

'Unnecessary Risk'

“The data reveal that a sharp rise in the number of religious exemptions is causing declining immunization rates,” the state health commissioner said. “This unnecessarily puts our children at risk for contracting measles and other vaccine preventable diseases.

“To address this unnecessary risk, I have recommended to Governor Lamont and legislative leadership that non-medical exemptions to vaccination be repealed. This will help ensure that all children in our state can learn in a healthy environment.”

For More Information from the State

- [Click here](#) to view the school immunization survey data released Monday.
- [Click here](#) for more information about vaccine-preventable diseases..
- Anyone with questions regarding the State of Connecticut immunization program can **call 860- 509-7929** or email DPH.Immunizations@ct.gov.

Full Text of State Health Department Announcement

The news release, [as found here](#), in its entirety:

Today the Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH) released the 2018- 2019 school-reported kindergarten student immunization data for all Connecticut schools with more than 30 kindergarten students. The data, which are available on the DPH website, reveal that there are now 134 Connecticut schools where the measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccination rate for kindergarten students falls below the federally recommended guideline of 95%. Significantly, these immunization rate data show a 31.1% increase in the number of schools that fell below the 95% kindergarten MMR vaccination rate guideline. There are a total of 47 schools that were below the 95% threshold in the 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 school years.

As reported previously, the overall statewide number of religious exemptions to vaccination increased by

25% between the two school years (from 2.0% to 2.5%). This represents the largest single year increase in religious exemptions for vaccination since the DPH started tracking the statewide data a decade ago. According to data released last week by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the national rate for non-medical exemptions for kindergarteners was 2.2%, placing Connecticut above the national rate by 0.3%.

“While it is good that state-wide in Connecticut we are still meeting the federally recommended MMR vaccination rate of 95% for kindergarteners, I am very concerned that the number of schools falling short of this important immunization level continues to rise,” said DPH Commissioner Coleman-Mitchell. “The data reveal that a sharp rise in the number of religious exemptions is causing declining immunization rates. This unnecessarily puts our children at risk for contracting measles and other vaccine preventable diseases. To address this unnecessary risk, I have recommended to Governor Lamont and legislative leadership that non-medical exemptions to vaccination be repealed. This will help ensure that all children in our state can learn in a healthy environment.”

The data DPH released today include a revised 96.1% statewide kindergartener MMR vaccination rate that is based on the revised data DPH received from Connecticut schools after reaching out to schools with lower than expected immunization rates to determine the accuracy of the reported figures. The public school kindergarten student MMR vaccination rate is 96.4%, and the private school kindergarten student MMR vaccination rate is 92.4%. The final percentage of religious exemptions to vaccination statewide remained unchanged at 2.5%.

High vaccination rates protect not only vaccinated children but also those who cannot or have not been vaccinated. This is called community immunity or herd immunity. Schools that achieve community immunity reduce the risk of outbreaks. High vaccination rates at schools are especially important for medically fragile children. Some children have conditions that affect their immunity, such as illnesses that require chemotherapy. These children cannot be safely vaccinated, and at the same time, they are less able to fight off illness when they are infected. They depend on community immunity for their health or even their lives. For students to be relatively safe from measles, the CDC guidelines state that at least 95% of kindergarten students in each school need to be vaccinated.

“Parents should discuss any questions or concerns about vaccines or vaccine safety with their child’s pediatrician or primary care physician,” said DPH Commissioner Coleman-Mitchell. “We need to work to ensure that every school in Connecticut achieves the CDC vaccination rate guideline to keep diseases, such as measles, from spreading in our children’s schools.”

This year so far 1,250 cases of measles have been confirmed across 31 states, including 3 in Connecticut and more than 1,000 in Brooklyn and Rockland County, NY: <https://www.cdc.gov/measles/cases-outbreaks.html>.

In the decade before 1963 when the measles vaccine first became available, nearly all children got measles by the time they were 15 years of age. It is estimated 3 to 4 million people in the United States were infected each year. Also each year, among reported cases, an estimated 400 to 500 people died, 48,000 were

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hospitalized, and 1,000 suffered encephalitis (swelling of the brain) from measles.

Click here to view the school immunization survey data released today:

<https://portal.ct.gov/DPH/Immunizations/School-Survey>.

For more information about vaccine-preventable diseases, please visit:

<https://portal.ct.gov/DPH/Immunizations/VACCINE-PREVENTABLE-DISEASES>.

Anyone with questions regarding the State of Connecticut immunization program can call 860- 509-7929 or send an email to dph.immunizations@ct.gov.