

Parents reminded to get kids immunized by Feb. 21

by Bend_Weekly_News_Sources

Public health officials in the Oregon Department of Human Services are encouraging parents to be sure their children's shots are up to date so they won't be sent home from school.

Beginning Feb. 21, children won't be able to go to school if their school or child-care records show they are missing immunizations and do not have an appropriate medical or religious exemption.

The immunization requirement is the result of a state law that applies to all public and private schools, pre-schools, Head Start and certified child care facilities.

"The goal is to make sure children are fully protected against vaccine-preventable diseases," said Lorraine Duncan, DHS Public Health Division immunization manager.

Last year, local health departments sent 30,296 letters to parents informing them their child needed immunizations to stay in school. A total of 5,301 children were kept out of school or child care until their records showed they received the required immunizations.

Many children get letters because their school or day care records are not updated, even though they may have all of their shots. School and child-care staff use Oregon Immunization ALERT, the statewide registry, to keep records current, but some information is available only from parents. Duncan advises parents to update their child's immunization record at school or child care after every shot.

"Vaccination against childhood diseases is one of the most cost-effective preventive measures we have," Duncan said. "Making sure kids have all their shots and don't miss school is a joint effort. DHS provides technical help, but it's the hard work and dedication of health departments, schools and facilities that really make this process work."

Parents seeking immunizations for their children should contact their health care provider, county health clinic or call Oregon SafeNet at 800-SAFENET or 800-723-3638.

Immunization is one of many public health programs within DHS that focus on prevention and helping people manage their health so they can be as productive and healthy as possible. Additional information on school immunization can be found on the Web at www.oregon.gov/DHS/ph/imm/school/index.shtml.

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