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IKK Steering Committee Releases Strategies for Improving, Sustaining Immunization Rates in Kansas

The Immunize Kansas Kids (IKK) steering committee today released a report aimed at assuring Kansas children receive the full complement of immunizations at the correct intervals. The report, entitled *How to Achieve and Sustain High Vaccination Rates Among Kansas Children: An Action Plan*, highlights 31 strategies designed to raise and sustain immunization rates in Kansas.

The strategies were developed based in part on the results of five IKK research projects that produced new information about where children are immunized in Kansas, what other states are doing to maximize their rates and the attitudes of parents and providers about the current immunization system.

Immunization rates in Kansas are at 79.2 percent, an increase of 12.4 percent since 2002, when Kansas was ranked 43rd in the nation, despite a decline in 2006 that caused the state's ranking to slip from 12th to 35th. The report details strategies developed to increase and sustain the immunization rate at 90 percent.

"Kansas faces many challenges in assuring Kansas children are fully immunized in a timely manner," said Roderick L. Bremby, Secretary of the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE), one of the lead agencies on the IKK steering committee. "I am confident that the strategies outlined in this report, coupled with the innovative initiatives that have already been implemented, will have a positive impact on the Kansas Immunization Program."

The report details 11 strategies designed to increase children's access to timely immunizations, including increasing the number of private primary care providers offering immunizations and increasing participation in the federal Vaccine for Children program, which provides free vaccine to children in low-income families.

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There are 10 strategies proposed to accelerate the full implementation of the Kansas immunization registry (KSWebIZ). The study recommends further implementation of the electronic interfaces between KSWebIZ and the data management systems at primary care providers around the state.

Four strategies are proposed to promote policies and regulations to support immunization activities by strengthening the registry and broadening access to immunizations. Another recommendation calls on the KDHE secretary to convene an advisory panel to help guide the implementation of the rate-improvement strategies and monitor their effectiveness.

The report also outlines three strategies to stimulate parental and provider involvement by developing new educational and promotional campaigns and by expanding the KDHE program, *Immunize and Win a Prize*.

In addition, the report calls for additional research to identify groups of children in Kansas that are at higher risk of missing some or all of their immunizations.

“One of the most important facets of the IKK project is that we have used research findings to develop strategies to improve the immunization rate,” said Dr. Gianfranco Pezzino, interim director of public health studies at the Kansas Health Institute (KHI). “Additional research will help us more precisely target interventions so that they are both more effective and more efficient.”

The IKK steering committee is comprised of representatives from 32 government and non-governmental organizations that play a role in Kansas immunizations. The Kansas Health Foundation provided funding for the project, which is being managed by KDHE and KHI.

The full report can be downloaded at www.khi.org and will soon be available online at www.immunizekansaskids.org.

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The Immunize Kansas Kids project is a unique partnership among the Kansas Department of Health and Environment, the Kansas Health Institute and dozens of stakeholder organizations. The goal is simple: to protect every Kansas child from vaccine-preventable diseases.

As the state’s environmental protection and public health agency, KDHE promotes responsible choices to protect the health and environment for all Kansans. Through education, direct services and the assessment of data and trends, coupled with policy development and enforcement, KDHE will improve health and quality of life. We prevent illness, injuries and foster a safe and sustainable environment for the people of Kansas.

The Kansas Health Institute is an independent, nonprofit health policy and research organization based in Topeka, Kansas. Established in 1995 with a multi-year grant from the Kansas Health Foundation, the Kansas Health Institute conducts research and policy analysis on issues that affect the health of Kansans.