

# NMDOH News Brief

# IMMUNIZATION



NM Department of Health Immunization Program

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## IMMUNIZING CHILDREN DURING COVID

CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC EDITION

### It's imperative to keep immunizations up to date during a Pandemic!



This certainly has been a different and scary time. COVID-19 has taken over our world in a way that few would have predicted. The clear message given mid-March for people to stay home was taken to heart by almost everyone except those whose jobs are considered essential. And by staying home, slowly but surely, New Mexicans have helped to flatten the curve and prevent our health care system from getting overloaded. This is a very good thing.

Instructing everyone to stay at home as much as possible and to postpone all but emergency

or essential activities, resulted in many parents being told that well-child visits were on hold and would be rescheduled

later in the summer. Some parents were reluctant to bring their children to a medical facility unless they were ill. Immunization efforts in many cases ground to a halt. Many Public Health Office staff have been reassigned to coronavirus activities and have discontinued their regular vaccination clinics. Provider offices are nervous to have well children come in when sick children might also be at the office. So for at least 2½ months, many children have not been vaccinated or been seen in-person for their regular well-child checks.

Recently, the CDC published data that show a

**Up to date immunizations in a pandemic**  
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**ARE YOUR KIDS UP TO DATE?**

GET CAUGHT UP ON VACCINES AND RELAX THIS SUMMER!

Check online VaxViewNM.org

HEALTH SCIENCES OFFICE FOR COMMUNITY HEALTH

NEW MEXICO DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

DOH and UNM social media posts promoting vaccinations for children. Like and re-post!

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# NMDOH Immunization Program

## *Staffing announcements*

### Erica Martinez-Lovato



Erica is retiring from state government and her position as Immunization Program Manager, effective July 1, 2020. She has been an effective, dedicated and

well-liked manager who will be greatly missed. Erica came to DOH from the Human Services Department in January, 2015 and quickly learned all about NMSIIS, the statewide immunization registry, that stores all immunization records as well as vaccine inventory. She led the implementation of a new registry software in 2016, smoothly bringing the program into the 21st century. She implemented Reminder-Recall, an evidence-based way to improve coverage. Erica led the transition to digital data loggers from thermometers to keep vaccines viable at the right temps. She took listening trips to Regions statewide and implemented the Immunization Newsletter to connect stakeholders. She has built a strong management team that will carry this important program into the coming years.

Erica will be greatly missed. Her competence, get-it-done attitude, and her lack of fear when confronting difficult challenges have left New Mexico with a strong program. She continues working on a new grant



proposal right until her last day on June 18.

We wish her well and look forward to hearing how she decides to contribute in new ways in coming years. Take care and many thanks, Erica.

*Katie Cruz, NMSIIS Staff Manager*

### Edward Wake

Edward Wake is our new CDC Public Health Advisor assigned to the NMDOH Immunization Program.



Edward comes to New Mexico via the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). His previous CDC assignment was with the New York City (NYC) Department of Health and

Mental Hygiene's Bureau of Immunization, where he served as a Public Health Advisor and worked as the Bureau's Adult Immunization Unit Chief. Previous to his assignment in NYC, Edward worked for the California Department of Public Health as the Vaccines for Children program regional supervisor in Los Angeles County. Before that, he

served as the vaccine manager for the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health's Immunization Program.

Edward is happy to work with public health professionals who are dedicated to reducing and eliminating vaccine-preventable diseases among the people of New Mexico.

### Up to date immunizations in a pandemic

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large drop in routine vaccines across the country.<sup>1</sup> It is concerning that many children may be insufficiently protected against our routine childhood diseases— the last thing we need on top of a pandemic is an outbreak of a vaccine preventable disease like measles or whooping cough. In addition, if children who are not vaccinated become sick, it is more difficult to know whether it's a cough from pertussis or coronavirus. Is it a bad headache from meningitis or from coronavirus? Is it pneumonia from pneumococcus or coronavirus? The efforts to keep children safe by keeping them at home have inadvertently allowed them in some cases to miss critical doses of vaccine.

Now we are facing a new phase of the pandemic in which we are cautiously starting to re-open, to come back to work, and to resume our “normal” activities—although with some modifications and new rules. This is also a different and

scary time. What if we see a new surge of cases? What if people don't follow the rules of physical distancing and wearing face masks? Am I safe to venture out of my house?

The guidance from CDC and AAP indicates that providers should make every effort to continue to immunize, *see insert below*.

“ Healthcare providers should identify children who have missed well-child visits and/or recommended vaccinations and contact them to schedule in person appointments, starting with newborns, infants up to 24 months, young children and extending through adolescence. State-based immunization information systems and electronic health records may be able to support this work.<sup>2</sup> ”

Providers should create time and space that separate well visits from sick visits. Some providers are utilizing morning appointments for well child checks and immunizations and afternoons for sick visits; some are utilizing one office for well

visits and another for sick visits. In addition, provider offices may have patients wait in their cars for their appointments in order to maintain physical distancing for those who have to wait. All providers are paying close attention to sanitize between patients and to screen patients for symptoms before they come in.

Working together to get the message out about the importance of vaccines, the importance of keeping children up to date and as protected as we can, needs to be as clear and present as the message of wearing a face mask in public and maintaining physical distancing. We know that vaccines work, that they are safe and that they save lives. Together let's keep our children and communities as safe as possible by not allowing these vaccine-

preventable diseases to come back.

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6919e2.htm?s\\_cid=mm6919e2\\_w](https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6919e2.htm?s_cid=mm6919e2_w)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/pediatric-hcp.html>



### Guidance for Pediatric Healthcare Providers on providing well-care during COVID-10

[services.aap.org/en/pages/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-infections/clinical-guidance/guidance-on-providing-pediatric-well-care-during-covid-19/](https://services.aap.org/en/pages/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-infections/clinical-guidance/guidance-on-providing-pediatric-well-care-during-covid-19/)

## Annual Provider Awards

*Award winners recognized for their immunizing excellence*

### Over 80% Childhood Vaccination Rates

- \* Maria G. Crawley, MD, Las Cruces  
Presbyterian Rio Rancho Pediatrics  
IHS, Zuni Community Health Center  
Children’s Clinic, Los Alamos  
Full Bloom Pediatrics, Las Cruces  
NM Primary Care Group, Las Cruces  
BCA Medical Associates, Carlsbad
- \* IHS Jicarilla Service Unit  
BCA Medical Associates, Artesia,  
Journey Pediatrics, Albuquerque  
Presbyterian Rio Rancho, 528 Clinic
- \* IHS Santo Domingo Health Center  
Lovington Medical Clinic

### HPV Completion

- Pueblo Pintado Health Center
- \* IHS Jicarilla Service Unit  
Thoreau Health Clinic  
Cochiti Health Clinic  
Las Cruces Family Medicine  
Union Medical, Roswell  
Cañoncito Health Center  
Reginald O Lord, MD, Albuquerque  
Rehoboth McKinley Christian Health Clinic, Gallup  
IHS Santa Fe Indian Hospital  
IHS Pine Hill Health Center
- \* IHS Santo Domingo Health Center
- \* Maria G. Crawley, MD, Las Cruces  
IHS Isleta Health Center  
Santa Ana Health Center  
IHS-Zia Health Clinic
- \* **Both Childhood and HPV award winners**



## Got Shots in the time of COVID-19

# Got Shots?

In a normal year, many children are in need of vaccines in order to register for school. This year, even more children will need to catch up on vaccines that were postponed during the spring.

NMIC, the NM Primary Care Association and NM Department of Health are collaborating with our MCO partners—BCBS of NM, Presbyterian Health Care and

Western Sky Community Care—again this summer to help kids get vaccinated before school starts. Got Shots is scheduled for July 25-August 15.

Got Shots is an annual effort where providers sign up for set times to open their doors for no-appointment, no-cost vaccines to any child ages 0-18 who needs vaccines, regardless of their insurance status or whether they are patient at that clinic. Getting an appointment in late summer can be challenging for parents; “Got Shots” helps parents by offering walk-in clinics just for vaccines.

This year, shot events may be organized slightly differently, including possibly:

- Ask parents and children over two to wear face masks
- Have patients wait in their cars and not in the waiting room
- Bring paperwork to patients in their cars
- Use hand sanitizer or wash hands before entering the exam room

Providers can access the registration form on the [NMIC website](#). Starting in July, parents can visit the website to see which providers in their county are participating in Got Shots.

**Contact us**

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Call or email us for more information or if you have an item to submit for publication.

