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Screening and Vaccination to Support Migrant Family Access to Public Health Care

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) is committed to vaccinating all children so that they are up to date with their immunizations and screening them for lead exposure and tuberculosis as part of the school enrollment process.

While many children newly arriving to Massachusetts may have received immunizations in the country where they previously lived, there may be some gaps that need to be addressed. Most frequently polio is identified as the vaccine that may need to be addressed.

As an example, 75% of individuals in Haiti have received at least one diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis (whooping cough) (DTP1) immunization, according to WHO/UNICEF estimates of national immunization coverage (WUENIC) from 2021.

To expedite vaccination and testing efforts and support local health providers, including local boards of health (LBOHs), community health centers (CHCs) and other providers, DPH has contracted with several local organizations to create vaccination profiles, perform testing for tuberculosis and lead exposure, and administer vaccinations. These organizations have already started visiting sites throughout Massachusetts and will continue these activities into the fall.

DPH notifies the local board of health before any onsite visit occurs and discusses what type of engagement, if any, the local board of health would like to have with these vaccination and testing efforts. If shelter providers are involved, DPH also works with them to ensure that families residing at the site have access to timely and effective communications.

In accordance with the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, schools must immediately enroll students who are homeless regardless of whether they have required vaccination documentation.

September 12, 2023

Vaccination:

The goal of this effort is for school-aged children, 5 to 18 years old, who currently reside in a state-supported hotel that primarily houses migrant families as of August 31, 2023, to be up to date with all immunizations in the next few months.

Site visits are being scheduled, considering geographic balance, number of families at a site, and anticipated length of stay at a site. John Snow International (JSI), a DPH-contracted provider, first schedules a date and time to go to each site to meet with each family to review any immunization records they may have brought with them. JSI nurses then create a vaccination profile for each child in the family that is entered into the Massachusetts Immunization Information System (MIIS).

Once the MIIS profile for each child at a site is complete and indicates which vaccines each child needs, DPH then works with Cataldo Ambulance Service, Inc., its vendor for mobile vaccines for children, to schedule an onsite vaccination clinic.

Vaccination clinics are scheduled to begin in early September. Cataldo Ambulance Service, Inc. will be able to hold vaccination clinics at up to five different sites each day and vaccinate children in the late afternoon/early evening hours, to accommodate school-aged children.

Tuberculosis and Lead Screening and Testing:

The goal of this effort is to test all children (6 months to 18 years old) for latent tuberculosis (TB) with an interferon gamma release assay (IGRA) (Quantiferon) blood test and connect to follow-up care, as necessary.

These children will also be screened for lead exposure with a venous blood draw. UNICEF estimates lead exposure rates in Haiti at least 4 times higher than the rates seen in the United States and for higher exposure levels (≥ 10 $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$ the level a child is considered poisoned in MA), rates are 8 times higher in Haiti than in the U.S.¹ Under the MA Lead Law and 105 CMR 460.050 *Mandatory Blood Lead Screening and Follow up Schedule* young children are required to be screened at least annually. Prior to entering school, kindergarten, or daycare, a child must have proof of at least one lead screening. DPH and its contracted vendors are currently scheduling and providing the needed vaccinations and lead screening. In the interim, under the federal [McKinney – Vento Act](#), school administrators must admit homeless children into school systems without the required immunizations or lead screening, which will allow time to conduct the screening and vaccination as well as time for school administrators to secure the records from families.

For adults, a TB symptom screen will be performed for all individuals older than 18 years of age. Adults with a positive symptom screen will undergo a chest x-ray to determine if the person has

¹ <https://www.unicef.org/sites/default/files/2020-07/The-toxic-truth-children%E2%80%99s-exposure-to-lead-pollution-2020.pdf>

active TB. Any individuals identified as having active TB infection will be treated and their infection will be actively managed prior to latent TB infection.

DPH is working to identify interpreters who can be available at each site as well as a support person who can be onsite at the supplemental shelters to help with testing efforts.

Schedule:

The following is a recap of the activities from the past week as well as a high-level summary of plans for the coming weeks:

- During the week of 8/22 JSI visited 11 sites to review any vaccination records and create immunization profiles in MIIS.
- Next week, JSI is scheduled to visit 12 sites and is scheduling additional site visits.
- DPH, using its vendor Quest, will be starting mobile TB and lead testing on September 5.
- Quest plans to visit five sites each day and can test up to 50 children at a site each day.
- Vaccination clinics are scheduled to begin in early September.

Resources Available:

The following list represents fact sheets and helpful materials in various languages that are currently available on DPH's website. These materials can be printed and made available to distribute to families to provide information about immunization and testing.

- Tuberculosis – from <https://www.mass.gov/tuberculosis>
 - [English](#)
 - [Spanish](#)
 - [Haitian Creole](#)
- Lead – from <https://www.mass.gov/lists/lead-brochures-and-fact-sheets>
 - Understanding Lead Poisoning — A Guide for Parents
 - [English](#)
 - [Spanish](#)
 - [Haitian Creole](#)
 - Pregnant? Get the Facts on Lead
 - [English](#)
 - [Spanish](#)
 - Nutrition and Children
 - [English](#)
 - [Spanish](#)
 - [Haitian Creole](#)
 - Where Does Lead Come From?
 - [English](#)
 - [Spanish](#)
 - Protect Your Family — Stay Ahead of Lead!

[English](#)
[Spanish](#)
[Haitian Creole](#)

- Additional Lead fact sheets available at <https://www.mass.gov/lists/lead-brochures-and-fact-sheets>
- COVID-19 (*these will become outdated when CDC releases new guidance in September*), from <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-vaccine-promotion-toolkit>
 - Is It Time for an Updated Booster?
[English](#)
[Spanish](#)
[Haitian Creole](#)
 - Boosters: Fast Facts
[English](#)
[Spanish](#)
[Haitian Creole](#)
 - Additional COVID materials
[English](#)
[Spanish](#)
[Haitian Creole](#)
- Flu
 - [Flu Facts brochure](#) (can download in English, Spanish, Haitian Creole)
 - [Flu Facts poster](#) (can download in English, Spanish, Haitian Creole)
- [Fact sheets on infectious diseases](#) (most available in multiple languages)
- CDC Childhood Vaccine Schedule
[English](#)
[Spanish](#)