



Public Information Office • P.O. Box 3902, Las Vegas, NV 89127 • 702.759.1390
www.southernnevadahealthdistrict.org

News Release

Contact: Stephanie Bethel, (702) 759-1393
Southern Nevada Health District
bethel@snhdmail.org

Carey Meyers, (212) 601-8297
Porter Novelli
Carey.meyers@porternovelli.com

Las Vegas Children's Immunization Alliance Announced

*Alliance fights low immunization rates in Las Vegas
with kick-off event at Baby Health Fair, Oct. 7*

LAS VEGAS, NV - September 25, 2006 - More than 40 percent of children in Clark County lack immunizations that help prevent deadly childhood illnesses like measles, mumps, pneumococcal disease and whooping cough. Today, the Southern Nevada Health District, the Southern Nevada Immunization Coalition, the Nevada Department of Health and Human Services, and the national organization Every Child By Two (ECBT) announced a new alliance and initiative called "Immunize On Time, Every Time!" The goal of this partnership is to increase immunization rates among Las Vegas' infants and toddlers, which are currently below the national average.

Even though U.S. immunization rates have climbed in recent years, many children are not up-to-date with their immunizations. According to a recent U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) report, 76 percent of children younger than 3 years in the U.S. are immunized for the combined recommended series of vaccines, whereas in Clark County, which includes Las Vegas, this figure is only 58.8 percent, the lowest among 28 urban areas sampled. The rest of Nevada (excluding Clark County) is 75.8 percent, just below the national average.

"For Southern Nevada's children, up-to-date immunizations are the best protection we can provide against potentially life-threatening diseases," said Dr. Donald S. Kwalick, Southern Nevada Health District's Chief Health Officer. "We need to increase resources in order to expand immunization awareness activities in the community. One resource that will provide added benefit to Clark County is the 'Immunize On Time, Every Time!' alliance."

"This new alliance will unite and strengthen our efforts to raise awareness about the importance of childhood immunizations in our community," said Jo Alexander, public health nurse supervisor at the Southern Nevada Health District.

-more-

LV Immunization Alliance Announced – add one

According to the recently released 2005 CDC National Immunization Survey results, for the first time in ten years in the United States, there is no longer racial or ethnic disparities in the overall immunization rates. However, disparities remain for certain vaccines. Black and Hispanic children are significantly less likely to receive vaccinations for diphtheria, pertussis (whooping cough), tetanus and pneumococcal disease compared to white children, while white children are lagging behind in receiving the chicken pox (varicella) vaccine.

One reason for low immunization rates are missed opportunities at the doctor's office to check a child's immunization status and vaccinate them if necessary. The alliance aims to empower parents to ask at every doctor's visit if their children are up-to-date with their immunizations.

Another tool for helping children stay up-to-date with immunizations is immunization registries. Registries are secure and confidential computerized information systems that collect and contain immunization data and provide authorized health care providers with immediate access to their patients' immunization status.

"Immunization registries are a great tool for helping parents and doctors ensure that children are immunized on time, every time," said Amy Pisani, ECBT's executive director. "No child should slip through the cracks and no parent should have to wonder if their child is fully protected against vaccine-preventable diseases."

Other cities participating in ECBT's "Immunize On Time, Every Time!" initiative are Houston, Newark and Cleveland.

Alliance Kicks-Off at Baby Health Fair in Lorenzi Park

On Saturday, October 7, the Alliance will host the Baby Health Fair at Lorenzi Park, Picnic Area A and will provide immunization information, as well as free immunizations, to children of all ages. To determine which vaccines are needed, parents and guardians are strongly encouraged to bring their children's immunization records to the Baby Health Fair.

Many other organizations will be on hand with child health and safety information, including the Family Resource Center, CDI Head Start, the Nevada Health Centers and the Las Vegas Fire & Rescue. The fair will also have free food and entertainment, and an opportunity for children to be photographed with the Big Shot Bunny, the mascot for the Northern Nevada Immunization Coalition.

Every Child By Two

Founded in 1991 by former first lady Rosalynn Carter and former first lady of Arkansas, Betty Bumpers, ECBT works to protect all children from vaccine preventable diseases by raising parental awareness of the critical need for timely infant immunizations, fostering the establishment of a systematic method to locate and immunize children, and providing convenient access to immunization services into the future. The "Immunize On Time, Every Time!" health disparities project is sponsored by an unrestricted educational grant from Wyeth Vaccines.

-more-

LV Immunization Alliance Announced – add two

Southern Nevada Health District

Created in 1962, the Southern Nevada Health District is one of the largest local public health agencies in the United States. The District serves approximately 1.7 million residents, which is more than 70 percent of Nevada’s population. In addition, the District safeguards the public health of almost 40 million visitors to Las Vegas each year.

The District is an independent entity that combines the county and unincorporated areas with five incorporated cities to form an area-wide public health agency. Upon its creation, the District employed approximately 30 employees. Today, it has more than 500 employees organized into four divisions and six locations.

Southern Nevada Immunization Coalition

The Southern Nevada Immunization Coalition is a non-profit partnership effort among various healthcare and non-healthcare individuals and businesses in southern Nevada. The mission of Southern Nevada Immunization Coalition is to foster a comprehensive, sustained immunization program for the residents of southern Nevada through education and increased immunization against vaccine-preventable diseases.

Nevada Department of Health and Human Services

The Nevada Department of Health and Human Services promotes and protects the health and well-being of all Nevadans and visitors to the state through its leadership in public health and enforcement of laws and regulations pertaining to public health.