



May 22, 2020

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor, State of California
State Capitol, First Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Childhood Immunizations during COVID-19

Dear Governor Newsom,

To help ensure children throughout California stay as safe and well as possible during this challenging time, the American Academy of Pediatrics, California (AAP-CA), California Academy of Family Physicians (CAFP), California Immunization Coalition (CIC), and the California School Nurses Organization (CSNO), **respectfully request that you publicly address the need for parents to continue to have their children vaccinated and to stay up-to-date on their vaccine schedules.** The last thing we need on top of the COVID-19 crisis is a resurgence of diseases like the measles and whooping cough, diseases that can easily be avoided through vaccine adherence.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), childhood vaccination rates are dropping dangerously as parents and guardians avoid doctor's offices or assume vaccinations are not being given during the COVID-19 stay-at-home order. Additionally, the CDC reports that health care facility orders for vaccines dropped notably in the weeks following the declaration of national emergency in response to COVID-19. To help address this growing problem, the CDC recommends healthcare providers "prioritize newborn care and vaccination of infants and young children (through 24 months of age) when possible."

You can help ensure California families are aware of how they can protect their children's health through vaccinations and overall well-child care by publicly communicating the following points:

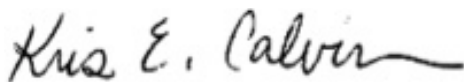
- **Call, Don't Cancel!** Parents should not assume their child's doctor's office is closed and instead, call to schedule or confirm appointments and determine what protocols the office has instituted to keep everyone safe from COVID-19.
- Many healthcare providers' offices are taking special precautions such as ensuring well children are kept separate from sick children, limiting the number of people who can accompany a child to their appointment, and taking temperatures of all family

members before allowing them into the building. Some providers are even providing drive-up vaccine programs.

- If their child's provider is not open for appointments, parents should ask if plans are in place to catch children up on vaccines at a later date, before the school year begins.
- Childhood vaccines remain a priority to avoid the spread of preventable diseases.
- Vaccines work best if they're administered on time.
- Delaying vaccinations for months can leave children vulnerable to preventable diseases – while stay-at-home orders are in place and after they are lifted.
- During this time of economic hardship, no infant or child should be denied a vaccine because of insurance status or ability to pay. The CDC [Vaccines for Children \(VFC\)](#) program offers immunizations at no cost to providers who serve eligible children. Parents can contact their provider or local health department for information.
- Parents are encouraged to discuss with their child's healthcare provider a timeline for restarting routine visits as there are numerous reasons for children to be seen for well-child exams that are critical to their overall health and development.
- Children need to be up to date on their immunizations in order to enter school this fall. Existing immunization requirements are still in place.

Thank you for your consideration of this critical matter. If you have questions or would like to discuss how we are working to keep California's children safe through vaccinations for preventable diseases, we are available to meet at your convenience. Please contact Catherine Flores-Martin at cmartin@immunizeca.org or (916) 414-9016.


Sincerely,



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American Academy of Pediatrics, California



Adam Francis
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California Academy of Family Physicians



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Executive Director
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Pamela Kahn, MPH, RN
President
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cc: Ann O'Leary, Chief of Staff
Richard Figueroa, Deputy Cabinet Secretary
Sonia Angell, MD, MPH, State Public Health Officer & CDPH Director
Nadine Burke Harris, MD, MPH, FAAP, California Surgeon General