



April 2021

Dear Health System Partner,

The United States faces a significant vaccination gap for school-age children, especially adolescents, due to the pandemic. As of February 2021, **public childhood vaccine doses are down over 11 million doses** for non-influenza vaccinations. Vaccine rates for younger children are down 5-10%, but public sector doses for adolescents are down 17-21% according to the CDC. Considering that preteens ages 9-12 are due for four vaccines, it is crucial that we continue to provide protection against all vaccine-preventable diseases.

Along with the [CDC](#), we are calling upon our health system partners to **take swift and decisive action to bring in school-age children between April and May of 2021 to catch up on missed vaccinations and provide newly due vaccines.**

The urgency for action is also propelled by an emerging challenge. Should the COVID-19 vaccines be approved for children as young as 12 years old, as anticipated this summer, we face the possibility of competing priorities during the usual back-to-school vaccination season. Current [CDC guidance](#) on provision of COVID-19 vaccines to ages 16 and older notes that no other vaccines should be provided two weeks before, during, or after the series.

Please join us in activating your health system, patients, and the public to schedule their adolescent well-child visits between now and the end of May for an [Early Safe Return to School Immunization Initiative](#).

Actions You Can Take:

1. Communicate Proactively to Families

- Tell families about [office safety measures](#)
- Promote availability of appointments
- Activate multiple channels to [communicate](#) with parents including calls, texts, emails, and patient portals

2. Activate Reminder/Recall Efforts

- Review current adolescent rates by site and provider
- Pull overdue and newly due patient lists
- Send [letters/emails](#) inviting patients in for [annual well-child visits and immunizations](#)
- Call patients to schedule well-child and immunization visits

3. Miss No Opportunity to Vaccinate

- Educate all care team members on the growing vaccination gap
- Use standing orders to increase immunization capacity
- Recommend all [ACIP- recommended vaccines](#) at every visit
- Consider recommending HPV vaccination [starting at age 9](#)
- Expand hours and locations for well-child and immunization-only visits

You are a trusted source of care to your patients. Resources to support your efforts: [health system call to action](#), [sample messaging for parents](#), [social media shareables](#), [parent facing materials](#). Additionally, the National HPV Vaccination Roundtable has resources available [here](#).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nicole Heanssler".

Nicole Heanssler
Cancer Control Strategic Partnerships Manager
Northeast Region, Maine