



## **St. Lawrence County Public Health Department**

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### **Press Release**

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### **National Infant Immunization Week April 27<sup>th</sup> – May 4<sup>th</sup>**

**Canton, NY-** St. Lawrence County Public Health Department is celebrating the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of National Infant Immunization Week (NIIW) from April 27<sup>th</sup> – May 4<sup>th</sup>. NIIW is an annual observance to celebrate the critical role vaccination plays in protecting our children, communities, and overall public health.

When the NIIW observance was established in 1994, immunizations programs were facing significant challenges. The nation was in the midst of a serious measles outbreak and communities across the US were seeing decreasing immunization rates among children. Although measles are not common in the United States today, with a national Measles, Mumps, Rubella (MMR) vaccination coverage level of 92%, one in 12 children in the US still does not receive their first dose of MMR vaccine on time, indicating considerable measles susceptibility across the country.

Despite being eliminated in the US, public health officials are currently reporting measles cases to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) due to an outbreak in 20 states. 626 individual measles cases have been reported in these states from January 1<sup>st</sup> to April 19<sup>th</sup>, 2019. Locally, while St. Lawrence County has not yet had a report of measles, there are currently 232 confirmed cases of measles in New York State outside of New York City. Vaccination coverage continues to vary by state, and pockets of unvaccinated people can even exist in states with high vaccination coverage. NIIW provides an opportunity to draw attention to these issues and to focus on solutions.

“Childhood vaccinations are one of the best ways for parents to protect their children against the 14 vaccine-preventable diseases, like measles” said St. Lawrence County Public Health Director, Dana McGuire. Because of the success of vaccines in preventing disease, parents may not have heard of some of today’s vaccines or the serious diseases they prevent. “These diseases can be especially serious for infants or young children. That’s why it’s important to follow the recommended immunization schedule to protect infants and children by providing immunity early in life before they come in contact with a potentially life-threatening disease.”

The federally funded Vaccines for Children (VFC) program can assist uninsured and underinsured families by providing vaccines free of charge to qualifying children. Make sure your babies are up-to-date with their immunizations by calling your doctor’s office or Public Health for copies of their immunization records.

It’s important that you and your children are fully immunized in order to protect against certain diseases. To schedule an appointment for you or your child for an immunization, please call the St. Lawrence County Public Health Department at 315-386-2325.

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