



Department of Health

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The Department of Health (HEALTH) is expanding two student immunization programs based on the success of the vaccination programs the schools have done to date. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recognized Rhode Island as achieving the highest adolescent immunization rate in the nation. This was possible because of our partnership through *Vaccinate Before You Graduate (VBYG)* and the tremendous effort in responding to H1N1.

Beginning with the new school year, we plan to work with you to implement an annual school-based influenza vaccination program to all school districts for students in grades PK through 8.

For students in grades 9 through 12 grade, we plan to expand the *Vaccinate Before You Graduate (VBYG)* program, to all students in grades 9 through 12 who attend a public, private, parochial or alternative school in Rhode Island. VBYG is a no-cost program that allows students to receive the following vaccines in a school setting:

- Hepatitis A vaccine
- Hepatitis B vaccine
- Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine
- Influenza (Flu)
- Meningococcal conjugate vaccine (Meningitis)
- Measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) vaccine
- Polio vaccine
- Tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis (Tdap) vaccine
- Varicella (chickenpox) vaccine

Since VBYG started in 2001, 14,000 vaccinations have been given to students. Your support, combined with the assistance and dedication of your school nurse teachers, has been critical to this program's success. Our goal is to ensure that all Rhode Island adolescents have all the vaccines they need before they leave high school. Expanding the VBYG program to include grades 9, 10, and 11 will allow us to achieve this goal and ensure our kids remain healthy and disease free.

We are working with Department of Education staff to schedule a conference call with you to discuss both programs and the planning we need to do over the summer to have these programs up and running in September. I hope that you will join us in our effort to vaccinate and protect all school-aged children in Rhode Island.

If you have any questions, please contact Patricia Raymond at 222-5921 or patricia.raymond@health.ri.gov

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David R. Gifford".

David R. Gifford, MD, MPH
Director of Health

Cc: Principals & School Nurse Teachers