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## Department of Health

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Commissioner

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Executive Deputy Commissioner

April 11, 2024

Dear Children's Camp Operator:

This letter is to remind children's summer camps in New York State of the importance of:

- immunization in the camp setting;
- immediate reporting of any suspected or confirmed vaccine-preventable disease to the [permit-issuing official](#) and the [city](#) or [county health department](#); and,
- the current threat of measles in the United States.

There has been an increase in the number of cases of vaccine-preventable diseases in the United States over the last several years, including those which have been linked to foreign travel, spread on school and college campuses, or spread at children's summer camps. Within the last twenty years there have been three mumps outbreaks that began in summer camps in New York State, one of these outbreaks resulted in more than 3,500 cases of mumps, Another outbreak involved measles among multiple camp staff. Most recently, there has been an increase of measles cases in the United States and around the globe, including five cases in New York State in 2024.

Settings, such as camps, where there is prolonged close contact with other individuals can promote the spread of vaccine-preventable diseases. There are also a significant number of international campers and staff in New York State. These individuals provide a diverse experience at camp; however, they may introduce diseases that are endemic in their countries of origin. The best protection against vaccine-preventable diseases is broad vaccination coverage. Therefore, age-appropriate vaccination of all individuals who will be working at or attending children's summer camps is **strongly recommended**. Individual camps may choose to recommend or require specific immunizations of their campers and staff.

**To date, in 2024, there have been more measles cases in the United States than there have been in all of 2023. Most measles cases are linked to foreign travel, but there have also been cases without an identifiable source. Please ensure that all staff and campers are immunized against measles. Also, obtain measles information at the links provided in the resource section below and distribute to staff so that they can be alert to the signs and symptoms of measles and report to the health staff or the camp director immediately.**

### **IMMUNIZATION RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CAMPERS**

The part of the State Sanitary Code that applies to campers is Subpart 7-2. It requires that the camp maintain immunization records for all campers. It does not, however, specify which vaccines are required for camp attendance. Individual camp policy may recommend or require specific immunizations of their campers. For the optimal health and safety of all campers and camp staff, the New York State Department of Health **strongly recommends** that all campers meet the age-appropriate immunization schedule as set forth by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP): <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/schedules/index.html>. At a minimum, campers should meet the same immunization requirements as school-aged children

as indicated in Public Health Law Article 21, Title 6, Section 2164. Refer to New York State Immunization Requirements for School Entrance/Attendance, available at: <https://www.health.ny.gov/publications/2370n.pdf>.

Further, In New York State, Public Health Law Article 21, Title 6, Section 2167 requires the notification of campers and parents about recommendations for and the availability of meningococcal vaccine for all campers attending overnight camps for a period of seven or more consecutive nights. Meningococcal ACWY (MenACWY) vaccine is recommended at age 11 or 12 years, with a booster dose at age 16 years. The New York State Department of Health does not recommend that campers receive either dose of MenACWY vaccine before recommended ages.

### **IMMUNIZATION RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STAFF**

Individual camp policy may choose to recommend or require specific immunizations of their staff. For the optimal health and safety of all camp staff, including international staff, the New York State Department of Health **strongly recommends** that all staff meet the age-appropriate immunization schedule as set forth by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP): <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/schedules/index.html>. At a minimum, immunizations that are routinely recommended (if not already administered, a documented history of disease does not exist, or serology has not proven immunity) include:

- 2 measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) vaccine doses;
- 1 tetanus, diphtheria, and acellular pertussis (Tdap) vaccine booster dose within the last 10 years; and,
- 2 varicella vaccine doses.

Hepatitis B vaccine is recommended for staff with reasonably anticipated risk for exposure to blood or body fluids (e.g., health care workers, lifeguards).

### **MAINTAINING VACCINATION RECORDS**

Subpart 7-2 of the New York State Sanitary Code requires camps to maintain immunization records for all campers which includes dates for all immunizations against diphtheria, Haemophilus influenzae type b, hepatitis B, measles, mumps, rubella, poliomyelitis, tetanus, and varicella (chickenpox). The record must be kept on file for every camper and updated annually.

Camps should also maintain current, complete immunization records for all camp staff. To facilitate a timely and appropriate public health response and minimize any disruptions at summer camp in the event of a suspected or confirmed case of a vaccine-preventable disease, camps should maintain a detailed list of staff, campers and other individuals who are not fully immunized or protected against vaccine-preventable diseases, as these individuals are at risk of getting sick if exposed. This list of susceptible individuals should clearly identify which disease(s) an individual is at risk of contracting. This immunization and health information should be readily available as camps will need this information to quickly identify individuals at risk if a suspected or confirmed case of a vaccine-preventable disease occurs during the summer camp season. Camps will be expected to review their plan and share developing lists of susceptible individuals with inspectors during pre-operational visits, and to show updated lists to health department staff who perform other visits during the season.

## REPORTING VACCINE-PREVENTABLE DISEASES

All suspected or confirmed communicable diseases, including measles and other vaccine-preventable diseases, are required by State Sanitary Code to be reported to the [permit-issuing official](#) within 24 hours. If you suspect a case of any vaccine-preventable disease, please notify your permit-issuing official as soon as possible and they will work with you to implement control measures that may prevent additional cases.

Additionally, all communicable diseases are required by [Part 2 Section 2.12](#) of the State Sanitary Code to be reported to the [city](#) or [county health department](#). Camps that have permits issued by a State District Office must also report to the [city](#) or [county health department](#).

## EDUCATION FOR STAFF

The camp health director or other healthcare provider should discuss with staff the symptoms of vaccine-preventable diseases prior to the camp season so they can assist in identifying anyone with signs of illness. The need to report the first sign of illness to the camp health director or camp director in accordance with established procedures for handling outbreaks in the approved camp safety plan, should be stressed with all staff.

## PUBLIC HEALTH ACTION

Please take the following five steps to reduce the risk for an outbreak of a vaccine-preventable disease at your camp:

1. Amplify the importance of age-appropriate immunization for all staff and campers, especially against measles;
2. Review the immunization records of all campers and staff and consider requiring additional vaccines for individuals who are not immune;
3. Maintain up-to-date immunization records for all campers and staff, including a list of those with known exemptions or individuals who lack immunity;
4. Ensure that staff are educated about the signs and symptoms of measles and other vaccine-preventable diseases;
5. Develop a policy that includes contact information for the immediate notification of the [permit-issuing official](#) of any suspected or confirmed case of vaccine-preventable disease; and,
6. Maintain a plan for isolating suspected or confirmed cases and quarantining exposed individuals if there are suspected or confirmed cases in the camp until the individual(s) leaves the camp. Consult with your local health department on how to isolate or quarantine safely.

Vaccines are a critical tool in preventing potentially deadly diseases. For the optimal health and safety of all campers and camp staff, the New York State Department of Health strongly recommends that all campers and staff at the children's summer camps meet the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's age-appropriate immunization schedule: <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/schedules/index.html>. **Operators of children's camps, as well as local health departments, have the authority to require immunizations for their campers and staff.** Thank you for your partnership and efforts to keep camps free of vaccine-preventable diseases and provide a safe and healthy summer camp season for all.

## **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

Children's Camps in New York State: <https://www.health.ny.gov/environmental/outdoors/camps/>

Measles information: <https://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/measles/>

<https://www.cdc.gov/measles/index.html>

New York State vaccine schedules and school entrance requirements:

<https://www.health.ny.gov/publications/2370n.pdf>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention vaccines: <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/>

Communicable Disease Fact Sheets: <http://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/>

Thank you for your partnership and efforts to keep camps free of vaccine-preventable diseases, and to provide a safe and healthy summer camp season for all campers and camp staff.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "P. Ruppert". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "P" and "R".

Patricia Schnabel Ruppert, D.O., M.P.H., CPE, DABFM, FAAFP  
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