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Tdap immunization rate at nearly 98 percent in Riverside County

About 98 (97.63) percent of Riverside County middle and high school students required to be vaccinated against whooping cough have received their Tdap shot, but health and education officials are encouraging the remaining children to get inoculated so they can remain in class.

The county has nearly 200,000 students between 7th and 12th grades who need to provide proof of immunization, which means there are several thousand children who lack the required shot, according to a countywide report. Eight county districts have a 100 percent compliance rate – taking into account those who have received the shot and those requesting a medical or personal belief exemption waiver.

“While the compliance rate is encouraging and the result of a lot of hard work, the goal is to make sure all children who are required to get the vaccine receive the vaccine,” said Dr. Eric Frykman, the county’s health officer. “There are sufficient vaccine doses available so that anyone who needs one can get one.”

Under state law which took effect July 1, students were required to show proof of vaccination before being allowed to enroll in school. Gov. Jerry Brown later signed legislation that allowed districts to conditionally admit students who can't show proof of vaccination for up to 30 days. Some districts started the school year in early August, so the 30-day extension has passed.

“My office has been working with the County Health Department and local school districts for many months to help get the word out about this important issue affecting students,” said Riverside County Superintendent of Schools Kenneth Young. “For the health and safety of all students, school staff, families and the public, I urge parents to comply with the law and have their children vaccinated or complete a vaccination waiver.”

Each school district is responsible for determining how it will comply with the law.

In California, more than 9,000 people contracted the illness last year and 10 infants died from whooping cough (Pertussis) during the outbreak.

Health and education officials are encouraging parents to take their children to a family doctor for the vaccine or make an appointment at one of 10 Public Health Family Care Centers in Riverside County if they do not have insurance.

For more information, please visit <http://www.rivcoph.org/pertussis> or www.ShotsforSchool.org.