

PUBLIC HEALTH NEWS & VIEWS

A Regional Health Professional Newsletter



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FROM THE MEDICAL DIRECTOR'S DESK

The pandemic has impacted our childhood vaccination rates across the jurisdiction. Whether it was the inability to get in to a provider's office, or the hesitancy of parents based on the development of the COVID-19 vaccines, our community is less protected from childhood disease than in the pre-pandemic years.

Based on the latest data from MDHHS, our childhood immunization ranking among the 88 counties for 19-35-month-old children with the 43133142 series, as of September 30, 2022, is Branch County 76th, Hillsdale County 69th, and St. Joseph County 77th.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) released new videos in its [Childhood and Adolescent Vaccine Education Series](#). In this series, pediatricians address the most common questions parents ask about their children's vaccinations and offer tips on finding correct information online.

Some questions that are answered in this video series include:

- Is it OK to Delay Vaccines?
- Can Babies' Immune Systems Handle so Many Vaccines?
- Why Vaccinate if I'm Breastfeeding?
- Do Vaccines Cause Autism?

I would be interested to know what your families are saying and thinking about vaccination. Please feel free to contact me with any comments or suggestions at 517-279-9561 or luparellok@bhsj.org.

CONTINUING EDUCATION ACTIVITY - HEALTH EQUITY

Creating health equity is a guiding priority and core value for public health. By health equity, we mean that everyone has the opportunity to attain their highest level of health.

How does this look? What does it all mean?

There are multiple facets to the problem and even in the questions. The first step is within ourselves. Are you aware of the unconscious biases you may have? What about the team members in your practice? What payers do you accept? Could your practice afford to accept more Medicaid patients? Is transportation a barrier for your patients? Are you still offering telehealth services?

Do you have the ability to offer translators, offer large print visit summaries if needed, or know basic American Sign Language?

All of us are struggling with turning this concept into actionable steps, but we must rise to the challenge. The past several years have uncovered some areas of opportunity within public health and the healthcare system. We are in this together!

<https://www.aafp.org/cme/all/online/health-equity-leading-the-change.html>

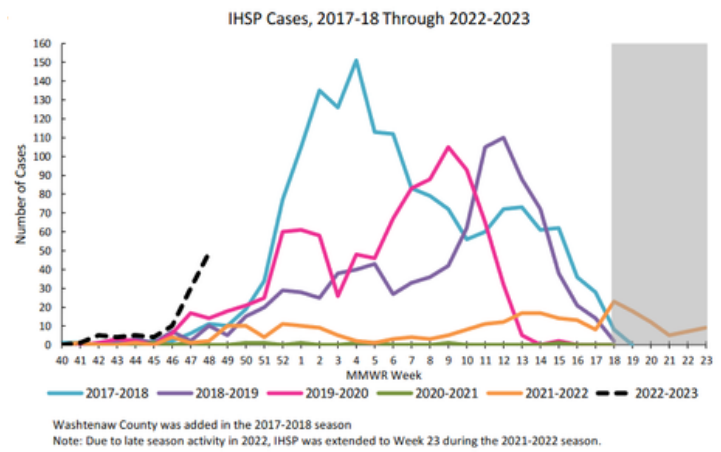
THE TRIPLEDEMIC

Influenza, COVID-19 and RSV are all circulating in the county, as expected. Vaccination continues to be our best defense to prevent serious illness and death.

Vaccination coverage for flu in the three counties is behind and lower than preferred. Providers are encouraged to have conversations with staff and patients to encourage vaccination and answer questions or concerns they may have.

As expected, this year's influenza season has started earlier than previous years and the initial curve is steep. In the presence of RSV and COVID-19, respiratory illnesses are placing a burden on your practice and hospitals.

Michigan Department of Health and Human Services Virology Laboratory Data shows H3N2 as the prevalent strain, with H1N1 in second. Influenza B cases were identified in October and early November, recently Influenza B has not been found in surveillance testing.



DOULAS - A SUPPORT FOR PATIENTS AND PROVIDERS

In 2023, Michigan Medicaid will begin reimbursing for doula services provided to individuals covered by or eligible for Medicaid Insurance (i.e., Medicaid Beneficiaries). Doulas eligible for reimbursement must be Medicaid-enrolled and listed on the MDHHS Doula Registry.

Doulas are trained birth workers who provide non-clinical emotional, physical, and informational support to pregnant people and their families before, during, and after birth. Doula support has been proven to be a safe and cost-effective intervention to improve birth outcomes. Doula services have been shown to positively impact the social determinants of health, support birth equity, and decrease existing health and racial disparities.

Dependent on person-centered needs, doula support during the perinatal period may include,

but is not limited to:

Prenatal services, which include:

- Promoting health literacy and knowledge;

- Assisting with the development of a birth plan;
- Supporting personal and cultural preferences around childbirth;
- Providing emotional support and encouraging self-advocacy;
- Reinforcing practices known to promote positive outcomes such as breastfeeding;
- Identifying and addressing social determinants of health;
- Coordinating referrals to community-based support services (e.g., WIC, behavioral health services, transportation, home visiting services)

Labor and delivery services, which include:

- Providing continual physical comfort measures, information, and emotional support;
- Advocating for beneficiary needs; and
- Being an active member of the birth team.

Postpartum services, which include:

- Educating regarding newborn care, nutrition, and safety;
- Supporting breastfeeding;
- Providing emotional support and encouraging self-care measures;
- Supporting beneficiary in attending recommended medical appointments;
- Identifying and addressing social determinants of health;
- Coordinating referrals to community-based support services (e.g., WIC, behavioral health services, transportation, home visiting services);
- Grief support services.

Medicaid will cover different types of doula services, including community-

based doula, prenatal doula, labor and birth doula, and postpartum doula. As required by federal regulations at CFR 440.130(c), doula services must be recommended by a licensed healthcare provider.

A recommendation for doula services may come from any licensed healthcare provider. Examples of healthcare providers qualified to recommend doula services are those licensed in Michigan as a licensed practical nurse, registered nurse, social worker, midwife, nurse practitioner, physician assistant, certified nurse midwife or physician.

One example of how a recommendation could be obtained is when a doula collaborates with a licensed healthcare provider who will recommend their services. Licensed healthcare providers recommending doula services are not required to be part of the beneficiary's healthcare team, but collaboration is highly encouraged.

COMMUNITY HEALTH NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND HEALTH IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The Branch Hillsdale St. Joseph Community Health Agency has begun to collect the data needed for a Community Health Needs Assessment, to develop a Community Health Improvement Plan.

Information on the process can be found [here](#).

Your opinion matters to us. Your front-line, individual health observations, will help us to develop and produce a plan to benefit the communities we serve. We hope that you will be able to actively participate in the project.