

IMMUNIZE LA Kids

Oliver Brooks, MD
Chief, Pediatrics
Watts Healthcare Corporation
Chair, IZ LA Kids

Steve Baranov
Principal Investigator
323-757-7244 x242
sbaranov@slahp.org

Julia Heinzerling, MPH
Chief, Community Health
Services
323-757-7244 x228
jheinzerling@slahp.org

Terry Silberman, DrPH
Co-Investigator
323-757-7244 x244
tsilberman@slahp.org

Tamekia Mosley, MPA, CHES
Project Coordinator
323-757-7244 x281
tmosley@slahp.org

June 19, 2007

Assemblymember
ADDRESS
City, State, Zip

Re: Protecting Children and Communities from pneumococcal disease and pertussis

Dear NAME:

Immunize LA Kids is a coalition of community-based organizations, health care providers, concerned citizens and others who work to improve immunization rates and reduce racial and ethnic disparities in the South Los Angeles area. We advocate for issues deemed relevant to the overall health of the community's residents and hereby go on record in support of efforts to protect children and our communities from pneumococcal disease and pertussis. I would be happy to be a resource to you as you consider pending legislation proposing the addition of pneumococcal vaccination to childcare entry requirements (SB 533), and the addition of pertussis vaccination as a middle school entry requirement as well as revised processes for designating vaccines required for school entry (SB 676).

Pneumococcus causes serious illnesses such as streptococcus pneumoniae, meningitis, bacteremia, and bacterial pneumonia. Streptococcus pneumoniae is the most common invasive disease in children over one month of age. Fortunately, the pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (PCV), which is recommended by the Centers for Disease Control Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) for all children ≤ 23 months of age and children 24-59 months of age who are high risk of pneumococcal infection, is safe and highly efficacious in preventing invasive disease. However, only 52.6% of California's children 19-35 months of age received all recommended PCV shots in 2005. Thus, nearly half of California's children are at risk for serious pneumococcus-related illnesses.

Pertussis, also known as whooping cough, is the only vaccine preventable disease that is widespread in California despite high levels of vaccination in early childhood. In 2005, California physicians reported more than 2,400 cases of pertussis - three times the number reported in 2004. To prevent and limit the spread of this deadly disease, the ACIP recommends vaccination with the Tdap (tetanus, diphtheria, & acellular pertussis) booster for persons ≥ 11 years old. This booster can protect adolescents and limit the spread of pertussis to infants and those with compromised immune systems.

While childcare and school vaccination requirements are highly effective in improving immunization coverage levels, the California Department of Health Services' Health and Safety Code does not require vaccination for pneumococcus for childcare entry or pertussis for middle school entry. Requiring these vaccinations will likely increase the proportion of individuals vaccinated against pneumococcus and pertussis and reduce the incidence of these diseases for all Californians. In addition, updating the State's process to designate vaccines for school entry requirements will align California with national school entry requirements.

The Immunize LA Kids Coalition supports childcare and school entry requirements for vaccinations as a proven, effective strategy for improving immunization coverage levels and reducing vaccine-preventable morbidity and mortality, and supports efforts to align our school entry requirements with national requirements. Please feel free to contact me if I can be of assistance to you as you consider the proposed legislation.

Signed on behalf of Immunize LA Kids Coalition,

Oliver T. Brooks, M.D.
Chair, Immunize LA Kids

Note: The above position was approved by consensus of the leadership of the Coalition. It does not necessarily represent the opinion of any individual member of the Coalition or its Steering Committee.

SOUTH LOS ANGELES HEALTH PROJECTS • 2930 W. Imperial Hwy., Suite 601 Inglewood, CA 90303 FAX: (323)779-1190

WIC Nutrition Program • Hospital-Based Breastfeeding Support • South Los Angeles Best Babies Collaborative • IZ LA Kids
Community Services of Los Angeles Biomedical Research Institute at Harbor-UCLA Medical Center