

## **Position Regarding: *Immunizations***

The North Carolina Association of Local Health Directors (NCALHD) supports all routinely recommended immunizations for children and adults. NCALHD endorses the concept of public-private partnerships as an effective strategy for increasing immunization rates. Such partnerships work for changes in clinical practice so that medical and preventive health settings are organized to avoid missed opportunities and to ensure people are offered the vaccinations they need.

NCALHD supports local health departments' efforts to implement evidence-based immunization strategies and encourages continuing education for medical providers on immunization policies and practices so that the vaccines are delivered in the most effective manner. NCALHD promotes community education aimed at health care providers and the public to help them fully appreciate the impact of vaccine-preventable diseases.

NCALHD also supports work to identify and overcome barriers to immunization that lead to vaccination levels that are substantially lower, nationally, in African-Americans, Hispanics, and other under-immunized populations. Investment in strategies to overcome such disparities in immunization will help the nation diminish other associated health disparities in the early health and healthcare of our children.

NCALHD encourages enhanced national, state, regional and local surveillance efforts to define disease burden and to monitor vaccine impact and improved tracking, sharing and record-keeping among immunization providers. NCALHD supports ongoing education across the spectrum of providers due to rapidly changing and increasingly complexity of the routine immunization schedule and the advent of multi-antigen vaccines.

NCALHD seeks full funding seek full federal funding for universal vaccination program.

Vaccines prevent illness, disability and death. Vaccines are available to protect against a wide array of diseases that have typically wrought havoc on populations, such as influenza, pneumococcal diseases, hepatitis B, polio, mumps, and measles. Vaccines have led to the global eradication of smallpox and the elimination of polio from the Americas and much of the world. However, every year vaccine-preventable diseases kill thousands of children, adolescents, and adults in the United States.<sup>1</sup> Vaccine-preventable diseases in the United States cost society billions of dollars per year.<sup>2</sup>

Immunization levels in many parts of the country remain dangerously low. Up-to-date immunization rate levels in some areas of the country are as low as 23%,<sup>3</sup> creating pools of susceptible children, exacerbating existing disparities and increasing the risk of dangerous disease outbreaks. Similarly, while many high-priority groups are urged to receive annual doses of influenza vaccine, coverage rates remain low.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> National Vital Statistics Reports. Deaths: Preliminary Data for 2002, Vol 52 (13), Feb 11 2004. <sup>2</sup> CDC, Immunization 2000: A History of Achievement, A Future of Promise <sup>3</sup> National Immunization Survey, July 2002 – June 2003. Data are for 4:3:1:3:3:1 – DTaP, IPV, MMR, Hib, HepB, Varicella. <sup>4</sup> Prevention and Control of Influenza. Recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP). MMWR. 53(RR06); 1-40, 28