

MID-MICHIGAN

# No local measles cases reported

Local counties have low waiver rates

---

**By Susan Field**

*sfield@michigannewspapers.com*  
*@sfield\_msun on Twitter*

---

A recent outbreak in cases of measles in children has not affected Isabella, Clare and Gratiot counties, all of which have vaccination waiver rates lower than 5 percent.

Becky Johnson Himes, a registered nurse and personal health services supervisor at the Central Michigan District Health Department, said there has not been a confirmed case of the measles since 2008 - and those were in Osceola County.

Michigan has had one confirmed case of the measles between Jan. 1 and Feb. 15, Johnson Himes said, and health officials encourage parents to get their children immunized, although some do not for a variety of reasons.

In Isabella County, 30 kindergarten-age chil-

**MEASLES » PAGE 2**

# Measles

FROM PAGE 1

dren have not had measles vaccinations, with parents getting waivers.

That represents 4.7 percent of the children in Isabella County entering kindergarten this year.

There are 11 children in Clare County, or 3.2 percent, who have not been immunized and have parents who have obtained waivers.

In Gratiot County, parents of 12 children, or 2.3 percent, obtained waivers to allow them to enter kindergarten without immunizations.

Parents who do not want their children immunized for medical reasons obtain waivers from their children's physicians, Johnson Himes said.

Waivers for religious or philosophical beliefs must be obtained from local health departments, she said.

As of Jan. 1. educa-

tion about the potentially waived vaccines must be obtained through a health department, she said.

Despite some parents not wanting their children immunized, health officials encourage vaccinations.

"We encourage vaccinations for all children, adolescents and adults to prevent any vaccine preventable diseases," Johnson Himes said. "A person with medical contra indications is the only circumstance in which we would

not encourage any recommended vaccinations."

In Michigan, immunizations must be reported to a state registry, and the Michigan Care Immunization Registry only includes who are in kindergarten, seventh grade and who are new to a school district.

Marianne Roe, the nurse for Clare Public Schools, thinks districts will see fewer waivers starting this year with new state requirements in effect that require parents to get

immunization education prior to obtaining waivers from health departments for non-medical reasons.

Some school districts also take part in educating parents about immunizations.

Staff at Luce Road Elementary, the Alma district's early childhood building, staff members work hard to help educate parents about the importance of immunizations, Alma Superintendent Sonia Lark said.

"They work with par-

ents and encourage them to complete any missing vaccinations for their child upon entrance to kindergarten," Lark said. "I believe our staff shows patience and yet is diligent at getting these records from parents."

"Some parents still choose to complete a waiver. Most waivers occur upon enrollment to kindergarten. Sometimes it is because they just have not taken their children for their scheduled immunizations."