

# Connecting Point

A MID-MICHIGAN DISTRICT HEALTH DEPARTMENT NEWSLETTER



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## Promoting Immunizations by Physicians With AFIX



Almost everyone knows that you can go to your local health department to get “shots” for yourself and your family. Have you noticed that some doctor’s offices provide immunizations and some do not? In order to ensure that as many people as possible are protected by immunizations, public health works to help all providers give immunizations.

The reason that some doctor’s offices choose not to provide immunizations, or do so sporadically, is that it isn’t always easy. Some vaccines are expensive. They have to be carefully refrigerated or frozen at certain temperature ranges, and if they are not, they could lose potency. Also, the practice has to employ someone to give the immunizations, and billing health insurance plans for immunizations can be complicated.

The Mid-Michigan District Health Department’s (MMDHD) program to promote immunizations at doctor’s offices is called AFIX (Assessment, Feedback, Incentives, eXchange). AFIX is a quality improvement program used to raise immunization coverage levels, reduce missed opportunities to vaccinate, and improve standards of practices at the provider level. The acronym for this four-part strategy stands for:

- **A**ssessment of the healthcare provider’s vaccination coverage levels and immunization practices.
- **F**eedback of results to the provider along with recommended quality improvement strategies to improve processes, immunization practices, and coverage levels.
- **I**ncentives to recognize and reward improved performance.
- **eX**change of information with providers to follow up on their progress towards quality improvement in immunization services and improvement in immunization coverage levels.

The purpose of AFIX is to assist and support providers by identifying low immunization rates, opportunities for improving immunization delivery practices, and ensuring that providers are:

- Aware of and knowledgeable about their immunization rates and missed opportunities to vaccinate
- Motivated to incorporate changes to their current practices
- Ready to try new immunization service strategies
- Capable of sustaining these new behaviors

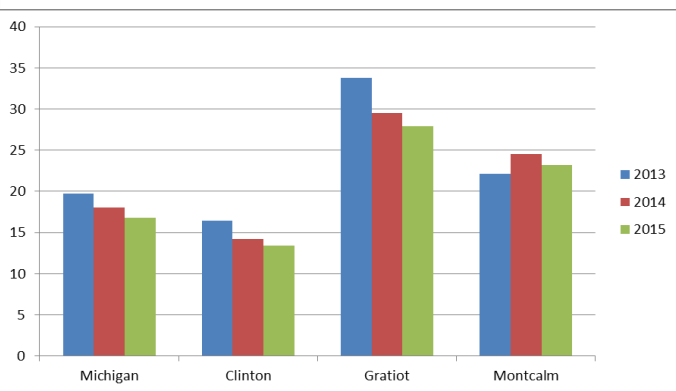
Lisa Mikesell, RN, coordinates the AFIX program at MMDHD, meeting regularly with area doctor’s offices to help them overcome difficulties in providing immunizations. Michigan has the fourth worst immunization coverage rate in the country. Getting more doctors to provide immunizations and to check immunization status at every visit would go a long way toward making sure we are all protected against vaccine preventable diseases. For more information on the AFIX Program, contact Lisa Mikesell, RN at (989) 875-1019 or at [lmikesell@mmdhd.org](mailto:lmikesell@mmdhd.org)

## Maternal Smoking

Women who smoke while pregnant put their babies at risk for being born prematurely and with a low birth weight. These infants are also at risk for respiratory problems including asthma, ear infections, birth defects such as cleft palate and cleft lip, learning disabilities, and Sudden Infant Death Syndrome.



Smoking rates for pregnant women in the Mid-Michigan District Health Department (MMDHD) area have shown some minor improvement over the few years. According to the State of Michigan Division of Vital Records, Birth Certificate Records, the percentage of women who smoked during pregnancy statewide in 2015 was 16.8%. Clinton County's rate remained below the State rate at 13.4%. Gratiot and Montcalm Counties rates exceeded the State rate at 27.9% and 23.2%, respectively.



The Michigan Tobacco Quitline has a program specifically for pregnant women, offering them incentives to quit and stay quit after the baby arrives, which is a challenge. Those interested can call the Quitline at 1-800-QUIT-NOW. Healthcare providers can refer patients using a fax referral form available at: <https://michigan.quitlogix.org>. Other cessation resources, including online and text programs are available at this website, as well as at [www.smokefree.gov](http://www.smokefree.gov).

## Children's Special Health Care Sibshops



Sibshops are special events that recognize the brothers and sisters of persons with special needs who are served by the

Children's Special Healthcare Program. The Sibshops model combines information and discussion with fun activities to help support family members.

The first MMDHD Sibshop will take place on Saturday, June 3rd, from 9:00 AM until 12:00 PM, at the St. Louis Church of Christ. Participants do not need to be Gratiot County residents. If you are interested in attending, or have questions about the program, contact Amanda, the parent liaison, at [ashaffer@mmdhd.org](mailto:ashaffer@mmdhd.org) or (989) 831-3637. Sibshop events are being planned in Clinton and Montcalm Counties in the future.

## Children's Oral Health

National Children's Dental Health Month brings an increased focus on the importance of regular dental checkups and a balanced diet. The theme of this year's campaign, "Choose Water for a Sparkling Smile," urges children to choose water, whenever possible, and avoid drinks with added sugar, like soda and sweetened juices.



Children can get off to a good start with a visit to the dentist after their first tooth erupts or before their first birthday. This creates a positive experience and establishes a dental home before problems arise. Parents should help kids to stay on track by encouraging them to eat a balanced diet, including healthy snacks, and see to it that they brush and floss daily and receive regular checkups. These actions promote healthy teeth and gums and will help ensure children have a sparkling smile that lasts a lifetime.

Additional tips from the American Dental Association include:

- Place only formula or breast milk in bottles and avoid filling them with sugar water, juice or soft drinks.
- Infants should finish their bedtime and naptime bottles before going to bed.
- If a child uses a pacifier, one that is clean should be provided—parents should not dip it in sugar or honey, or put it in their mouths before giving it to the child.
- Encourage children to drink from a cup by their first birthday and discourage frequent or prolonged use.
- Older children should follow the same rules of regular brushing, flossing, dental visits, eating a balanced diet, and choosing water instead of sugary beverages like juice and soft drinks. Keep in mind that sugars and starches encourage the production of plaque, which can attack tooth enamel. Also, it's not just the sugar in soft drinks that decays teeth; it's the acid too, making it double trouble.

The Montcalm Community Dental Center in Sidney and My Community Dental Center in St. Johns are operated by My Community Dental Centers on behalf of the Mid-Michigan District Health Department. Both dental centers serve those enrolled in Medicaid, including Healthy Kids and MiChild, the Healthy Michigan Plan, low-income uninsured and those with private insurance. These centers are accepting new patients. For more information or to schedule an appointment, please call 1-877-313-6232.

*For more information about these and other Health Department programs, contact:*

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