MICHIGAN

Vaccine waiver rates up for school-age children

LANSING, MICH. — Vaccine waiver rates for school-age children have increased slightly in Michigan.

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services data shows 3.2 percent of kindergartners and seventh-graders received immunization waivers in 2016 compared to 3.1 percent the year before, according to The Detroit News. The immunization rate was 4.8 percent in 2014. Since 2015, the state has required parents to attend educational sessions if they want to delay or decline immunizations for diseases such as measles, mumps, whooping cough, polio, diphtheria, hepatitis B and chickenpox. “What we’re seeing is more vaccine hesitancy, more vaccine-resistant parents,” said Bob Swanson, state Health and Human Services division of immunization director. “And that’s a concern to all of us.” “The more kids we have vaccinated, the better our population is, and that’s really what our primary goal is,” Swanson added. But some parents fear vaccinations could cause autism in children — a theory health officials have dismissed. Lisa Wiervicki said it still should be up to the parents. Wiervicki, of Canton Township, sought a waiver for her daughter after her son had an adverse reaction to a hepatitis B vaccine after birth. Her son has a blood disorder called chronic benign neutropenia, she said. “I think vaccine injury is everywhere, and nobody knows the reactions to vaccines so they’re not seeing it,” Wiervicki said. Schools are required to report the immunization status of kindergartners, seventh-grade and transferring students, the newspaper reported. The state says there were 7,657 fewer waivers reported from schools in 2015 compared to the year before. Public health officials say the parental mandates implemented in 2015 have helped discourage vaccine opt-outs.

— The Detroit News via The Associated Press