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## KINDERGARTEN AND 7<sup>TH</sup> GRADE IMMUNIZATION RATES IN PINELLAS SCHOOLS



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Immunization rates for kindergarten and seventh-grade students in Pinellas County for the 2015-2016 school year have risen each year since 2008-2009, but public health's goal is still to have all children protected from vaccine-preventable diseases.

The combined Pinellas kindergarten rate for public and private schools was 94.5 percent and the seventh-grade rate was 97.5 percent during 2015-2016. (For the State of Florida, the rates were 93.7 percent for kindergartners and 96.3 percent for seventh graders.)

The current rates per county and per public or private schools are available in the *Florida Annual Immunization Assessment 2015-2016* report compiled by the State of Florida's Bureau of Immunizations. The report also includes historical data on rates dating back to 1998 to track trends. (The report is attached as a PDF; see table below for a comparison.)

**Vaccination Rates for Pinellas Public and Private Kindergarten and Seventh Grades**

	2015-2016	2008-2009
Kindergarten, public schools	95.3	
Kindergarten, private schools	89.5	
<b>Overall kindergarten rate</b>	<b>94.5</b>	<b>89.8</b>
Seventh grade, public schools	97.9	
Seventh grade, private schools	95.1	
<b>Overall seventh-grade rate</b>	<b>97.5</b>	<b>93.7</b>

"Fully immunizing children is a key part of public health's mission worldwide," said Dr. Ulyee Choe, director of the Florida Department of Health in Pinellas County (DOH-Pinellas). "We have eradicated diseases that used to harm and kill children, but we are always concerned when we see vaccine-preventable diseases such as pertussis or measles crop up."

Vaccination rates at public schools tend to be higher than those at private schools nationwide and Pinellas is no exception. For example, the kindergarten rate at public schools in Pinellas is 95.3 percent; for private schools, the rate is 89.5 percent.

Combined vaccination rates for public and private kindergarten students have risen from a low of 89.8 percent in 2008-2009 to 93.7 percent in 2015-2016. During the same time span, seventh-grade rates also rose. In 2008-2009, the rate was 93.7 percent compared to 2015-2016's 96.3 percent.

(more)

The Bureau of Immunizations also selects a random sample of Florida schools for its annual *Validation Assessment*. That report lists rates at only a few selected schools and was released on March 10.

The *Florida Annual Immunization Assessment 2015-2016* report includes the number of temporary, medical and religious exemptions by county and the state. In both kindergarten and seventh grades, the number of religious exemptions is higher than those for medical reasons. County health departments grant religious exemptions when requested by parents or guardians.

For information about the Florida Department of Health in Pinellas County, go to [www.PinellasHealth.com](http://www.PinellasHealth.com).

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The department, nationally accredited by the [Public Health Accreditation Board](#), works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

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