



## KEY FINDINGS

### COLORADO HEALTH INSTITUTE REPORT COLORADO CHILDHOOD IMMUNIZATION RATES: POLICY AND PRACTICE June 2005

- Colorado's immunization rates for 2-year-olds are at or near the federal government's Healthy People 2010 objectives for all individual recommended vaccines except the fourth dose of diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis (DTaP).
- The state's low 2002 and 2003 ranking from the Centers for Disease Control on the 4:3:1:3:3 combined vaccination series was driven by low coverage rates of this fourth dose of the DTaP vaccine. The low rate was due to national vaccine shortages coupled with state budget constraints.
- High vaccination rates for 2-year-olds mask the fact that many Colorado children do not receive vaccinations at the recommended ages. In particular, infants under 12 months have lower coverage rates but are the most susceptible to adverse outcomes from infectious diseases.
- Childhood poverty is the most often cited risk factor for under-immunization.
- Geographic, economic and cultural pockets of under-immunization exist in Colorado, heightening the risk of a vaccine-preventable outbreak in those areas.
- Financial and structural access issues exist in both public and private immunization programs, including restrictive criteria for public insurance programs, low provider participation in Medicaid, transportation challenges for poor families, clinical hours incompatible with parents' work schedules, data limitations, and lack of coordination between public agencies administering immunization programs.
- Three areas in Colorado's immunization efforts need policy attention:
  - ✓ *The timeliness of immunizations, especially for infants under 12 months of age.*
  - ✓ *Under-immunized populations.*
  - ✓ *Administration of the fourth dose of the DTaP vaccination.*

#### Options for improving Colorado immunization rates:

- Create a state-level vision and plan that strengthens coordination between programs administered by departments of Health Care Policy and Financing (Medicaid) and Public Health and Environment, and build on private sector involvement.
- Invest in information systems to improve data collection for planning, evaluation and monitoring.
- Make strategic investments that improve access to immunizations and address state priorities.