



St. Mary's County Health Department

NEWS RELEASE

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ST. MARY'S COUNTY'S SCHOOL VACCINATION PROGRAM HAS HIGHEST PARTICIPATION RATE IN STATE

(LEONARDTOWN, MD) April 18, 2007 – Nearly 60 percent of all school-aged children, ages 5-11, in St. Mary's County participated in a statewide influenza vaccination program last fall, making St. Mary's County the state's leader in providing influenza protection for this age group.

The Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) began the FluMist campaign in October, initiating a project that would take 5 months and immunize over 100,000 children statewide.

"We are very proud of the success we achieved working with St. Mary's County Public Schools and other private schools in the area," said Nancy Luginbill, RN, director of community health services at the health department. "There were many roads to success throughout the state, but our in-school clinics, made successful by the cooperative partnership between the health department and school nurses, seemed to be the distinguishing feature of our program."

Carroll County vaccinated approximately 44 percent of its school-aged children, and achieved standing as the number two district. All 24 counties participated. The project was noted nationally as a valuable preparation tool for a possible influenza pandemic at the National Influenza Vaccine Summit held in March.

(more)

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Draft plans are being considered for a similar statewide program this fall. According to Luginbill, this flu season was relatively mild for St. Mary's County. Whether this is due to the mass influenza immunization program in the county is yet to be determined.

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