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## **New Rule Before School! Whooping Cough Vaccine Now Required for 7<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> Grade Students**

If the new school year were to begin today, only about one in five middle and high school students in Riverside County would be allowed to attend classes because they lack the proper vaccination against whooping cough.

The county has about 228,120 students between 7<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades who will need to provide proof of immunization before starting school in the fall. This new requirement applies to all public and private schools.

"With the school year coming to a close, it is a great time to remind parents and guardians about the new rule," said Dr. Eric Frykman, Health Officer for Riverside County Community Health Agency. "This way parents can be prepared for the new school year."

Riverside County parents are being urged not to wait for the new school year to begin, since there will be no grace period. Under the new law, students will not be allowed to start school without proof of vaccination.

The Riverside County Department of Public Health, in collaboration with the Riverside County Office of Education, have been working together to bring attention to the issue and get more students vaccinated before the new school year. According to an informal survey of county school districts, only about 20 percent of those responding reported that students have completed the Tdap immunization requirements for whooping cough. Some reported less than a 10 percent compliance rate.

"The Riverside County Office of Education is committed to proactively communicate with our parents and guardians about any issue that may impact the health and safety of our students," said Kenneth Young, Riverside County Superintendent of Schools. "I encourage all schools to closely monitor this issue and continue to share relevant information with the parents and guardians through your school websites, newsletters and telephone messaging."

Health and education officials are encouraging parents to take their children to a family doctor for the vaccine or make an appointment at one of 10 Public Health Family Care Centers in Riverside County if they do not have insurance.

For more information, please visit <http://www.rivcoph.org/pertussis> or [www.ShotsforSchool.org](http://www.ShotsforSchool.org).