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NATIONAL
ASSOCIATION OF
COUNTY AND CITY
HEALTH OFFICIALS

STATEMENT OF THE

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COUNTY AND CITY HEALTH OFFICIALS

on

IMMUNIZATION REGISTRIES

April 2000

The National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) strongly supports the development of immunization registries at the local and/or state levels. Local public health departments are highly engaged in maintaining and improving immunization rates in their communities and registries would provide indispensable assistance. Local public health officials have become highly alarmed about the prospect for declining immunization rates as funds available to reach those children who are most difficult to reach have declined. An investment in immunization registries would be an important aspect of building and sustaining systems that we need in order to protect children from vaccine-preventable disease.

Local public health departments, the agencies of government charged with protecting the health of the public at the local level, provide a variety of services to maintain and improve childhood immunization rates. Identifying under-immunized children, particularly in areas where immunization rates are low, and assuring that they receive the immunizations they need, are key activities. Local public health departments, often working closely with private health care providers in the community, may conduct outreach, chart reviews and quality assurance, devise tracking and recall systems, conduct community education, and build partnerships with other organizations that serve children, such as WIC programs and child care centers. They often administer immunization clinics for children who have no regular health care provider and work to make them as accessible as possible to the populations most in need.

Maintaining childhood immunization rates is a never-ending activity, because every day children are born or move into a community. It is resource-intensive because under-immunized children must be identified and reached one at a time and the methods for accomplishing this are widely varied. The availability of accurate computerized information on children's immunization status would ease these burdens and would greatly benefit parents and health care providers, as well as public health officials. NACCHO recognizes that parents must be assured of appropriate confidentiality, or else a registry system will not be accepted in a community.

NACCHO represents the almost 3000 local public health departments – in cities, counties, and towns. NACCHO members work every day on the front lines in protecting and promoting the health of their communities. We know from firsthand experience how complacency and inattention to such basic public health practices as childhood immunization can result in unnecessary disease, disability and death. We fully support immunization registries as an invaluable tool for preserving the health of communities by reducing the incidence of vaccine-preventable childhood diseases.