

Schools play a vital role in saving lives. The first line of defense in health is education.

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The health and wellness of Iowa students is a priority. The school and the community must come together to address the needs of the whole child. This is why the organizations listed on the side of this letter are united in strongly encouraging all Iowa school districts to continue providing education about human papillomavirus (HPV), the vaccine to prevent HPV, and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) in school. While recent legislation removed the requirement from the state mandate to include education regarding HPV and AIDS, it does not prohibit schools from teaching this important information. It is imperative for schools to continue providing HPV prevention education. By educating students about HPV prevention, and emphasizing the opportunity to receive the HPV vaccine, we can actively promote the health and safety of our youth.

HPV is a common virus that can cause cancer later in life. Every year, HPV infects 13 million people, both men and women. In the U.S., nearly 36,000 people are estimated to be affected by a cancer caused by HPV infection each year.¹ While there are early detection screenings for cervical cancer, there are no other recommended screenings for the other cancers caused by HPV infection, like cancers of the mouth, throat, anus, penis, vagina or vulva. As stated in the 2023 Cancer in Iowa [report](#) by the Iowa Cancer Registry, **Iowa has the second-highest incidence rate for cancer in the U.S., and Iowa is the only state with an increasing rate of cancer.**² In fact, **Iowa is first in the nation for cancer in the mouth and throat, which can be caused by HPV.**

HPV vaccination provides safe, effective, and lasting protection against HPV infections that most commonly cause cancer, yet only 45.7% of adolescents have completed the HPV vaccine series in 2022 in Iowa.³ This rate is much lower than the completion rate for other recommended adolescent vaccines. The HPV vaccination series can be given to males and females starting at age 9. The HPV vaccine entails a series of either two or three doses, depending on the age at initial vaccination, ensuring comprehensive protection against the virus and its potential risks.

Educating and protecting our youth from HPV is a collective responsibility, involving parents, schools, health care providers and community organizations. **Together, we can ensure that every youth receives the protection they deserve against HPV and the potential consequences including cancer.**

Resources

- [Iowa Immunizes Coalition](#)
- [Eyes Open Iowa](#)

Works Cited

1. [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. \(2022\). How many cancers are linked with HPV each year?](#)
2. [Iowa Cancer Registry. \(2022\). Cancer in Iowa 2022.](#)
3. [Iowa Department of Health and Human Services, Immunization Program. \(2022\). Iowa Public Health Tracking Portal Human Papillomavirus \(HPV\) Vaccine Data.](#)

