

To: LDH Team Members

From: Dr. Ralph Abraham

RE: Public Health and Vaccines at LDH

Date: February 13, 2025

First, let me applaud your untiring efforts to keep the citizens of Louisiana safe on a day-to-day basis. This is no easy task with the challenges we are facing.

To that end, there have been a lot of thoughtful questions about where the Administration stands as it relates to vaccine promotion, emergency response and prevention. It is this Administration's position that:

- LDH's role as a state health agency is to present scientifically-based information about health care and public health interventions. As this relates to vaccines, LDH staff are directed to use language with a renewed focus on meeting people where they are. Rather than instructing individuals to receive any and all vaccines, LDH staff should communicate data regarding the reduced risk of disease, hospitalization, and death associated with a vaccine and encourage individuals to discuss considerations for vaccination with their healthcare provider.
- For many illnesses, vaccines are one **tool in the toolbox** of ways to combat severe illness and should be used as such thoughtfully and strategically.
- **Informed consent** is foundational to vaccination.
- Conversations about specific vaccines, and whether or not a vaccine is right for a specific person, are best had with the **individual's healthcare provider**, who best understands their individual situation and relevant medical history.
- Vaccines should be treated with nuance, recognizing differences between seasonal vaccines and **childhood immunizations**, which are an important part of providing immunity to our children.
- It is important that healthcare providers discuss the **risks and benefits** of vaccines with parents, answering all questions and concerns based on scientific evidence.
- Getting vaccinated, like any other health procedure, is an individual's **personal choice**.
- The State of Louisiana and LDH have historically promoted vaccines for vaccine preventable illnesses through our parish health units (PHUs), community health fairs, partnerships and media campaigns. While we encourage each patient to discuss the risks and benefits of vaccination with their provider, LDH will **no longer promote mass vaccination**.
- PHUs will continue to **stock and provide vaccines**. Individuals without an established provider relationship who would like a vaccination or would like to discuss vaccine questions are encouraged to visit their local PHU, each overseen by a regional medical director.
- LDH Office of Public Health has an indispensable role in responding to **emergent disease outbreaks** that may require vaccine promotion as part of the mitigation of the spread of infectious disease. The Department will continue to be vigilant and responsive in this role. Recommendations for the use of vaccines in order to control an outbreak or to prevent disease in an individual with a known exposure to a vaccine preventable illness can continue to be communicated under the direction of the state epidemiologist.
- As **emerging diseases** continue to challenge our health, we will follow expert advice and apply all scientifically recommended guidelines to combat spread, severe illness, hospitalization and death as public health and safety is our paramount priority.