



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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State health officer assures parents that evacuees pose no increased health risk

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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State Health Officer Dr. Donald Williamson said students displaced by Hurricane Katrina who enroll in Alabama schools pose no increased health risk to fellow students.

"Many children from the devastated areas of Mississippi and Louisiana who are enrolling in Alabama schools were not exposed to flood water," Dr. Williamson said. Those who may have been exposed are being evaluated in the various shelters and are being monitored for illness symptoms. They are receiving treatment if they need it. Standard practice says that any child who is sick should not be sent to school.

"Routine in-school prevention measures should be practiced," Dr. Williamson said. These include frequent and thorough handwashing with soap and warm water, especially after visits to the restroom and before eating.

In addressing concerns about vaccination status, immunization requirements for school attendance in Mississippi and Louisiana are similar to those in Alabama.

"Just because families did not escape with their immunization records does not mean they are behind in their shots," Dr. Williamson said. "If students were enrolled in school in those states, chances are they are immunized."

Furthermore, he added, "Even if some incoming students were not vaccinated, the vaccines Alabama children have received would protect them against measles, mumps, chicken pox and other vaccine-preventable illnesses."

Questions about immunizations can be directed to the Division of Immunization, Alabama Department of Public Health, at 1-800-469-4599.

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