Higher vaccination rates can protect vulnerable Texans from infectious diseases.

In 2017-18, Texas faced unprecedented public health and infectious disease obstacles, with Hurricane Harvey, the influenza epidemic, and multidrug resistant-organisms. Vaccines are a safe and cost-effective way to prevent or mitigate infectious diseases. However, as immunization rates wane and these diseases threaten to make a comeback, Texas must protect its most vulnerable populations.

**FIRST RESPONDERS**

To do their job safely, first responders must be vaccinated against serious infectious diseases. Unfortunately, during Hurricane Harvey, many first responders were unaware of their vaccination status and thus unable to enter disaster areas to promptly render aid. Texas must be better prepared when disaster strikes again. We must help protect those who protect us.

**LONG-TERM CARE RESIDENTS**

Aging Texans are among the most vulnerable to influenza outbreaks, especially those who live in long-term care facilities. They also are more susceptible to infection by multidrug-resistant organisms, which cannot be treated with antibiotics. The consequences can be deadly.

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1. **Protect first responders against vaccine-preventable infectious diseases** by enabling access to their own up-to-date immunization status during a disaster and requiring their employers to establish protective infection control policies.

2. **Continue to fund key programs that increase adult access to immunizations**, such as the Adult Safety Net (ASN) program at the Texas Department of State Health Services. Provide underinsured first responders and seniors access to ASN vaccines. Ensure Medicare recipients are able to obtain vaccination during the coverage gap (also referred to as “donut hole”) period.

3. **Improve long-term care facility infection control to protect health care workers and residents against flu and multidrug resistant organisms**. Define the conditions of reportable flu and multidrug resistant organism infection outbreaks and make long-term care facility resident and employee aggregate immunization rates more accessible.

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200 of the 268 reported flu outbreaks in Texas in 2017-18 occurred in a long-term care facility.

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1. Source: [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](https://www.cdc.gov/flu/)

2. Source: [Texas Department of State Health Services](https://www.dshs.texas.gov)

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IN THE 2017-18 FLU SEASON

11,917 TEXANS DIED BECAUSE OF THE FLU

76% WERE AGE 65+

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THE TEXAS PUBLIC HEALTH COALITION RECOMMENDS:

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PREVENT INFECTIOUS DISEASE OUTBREAKS
The Texas Public Health Coalition is a coalition of health professional organizations and health-focused organizations dedicated to disease prevention and health promotion.

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MEMBERS

Alzheimer’s Association
American Heart Association
Blue Cross Blue Shield of Texas
Children’s Hospital Association of Texas
The Cooper Institute
Harris County Public Health
The Immunization Partnership
March of Dimes
Methodist Healthcare Ministries
Texas Academy of Family Physicians
Texas Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics
Texas Academy of Physician Assistants
Texas Association of City & County Health Officials
Texas Association of Community Health Centers
Texas eHealth Alliance
Texas Health Institute
Texas Hospital Association
Texas Medical Association
Texas Nurses Association
Texas Oral Health Coalition, Inc.
Texas Osteopathic Medical Association
Texas Pediatric Society
Texas Physicians for Social Responsibility
Texas Public Health Association
Texas Renal Coalition
Texas School Nurses Organization
Texas State Alliance of YMCAs
United Ways of Texas

RESOURCES

CANCER PREVENTION AND RESEARCH INSTITUTE OF TEXAS
MD ANDERSON CANCER CENTER
MICHAEL AND SUSAN DELL CENTER FOR HEALTHY LIVING
PARTNERSHIP FOR A HEALTHY TEXAS
TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF STATE HEALTH SERVICES

REFERENCES

2 Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS), 2017-18 surveillance data from the Division for Laboratory and Infectious Diseases Services