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For immediate release:

National Immunization Awareness Week begins August 1

The West Virginia Immunization Program is announcing August as National Immunization Awareness Month (NIAM).

The goal of NIAM is to increase awareness about immunizations across the life span, from infants to the elderly. Immunization is one of the most significant public health achievements of the 20th century. Vaccines have eradicated smallpox, eliminated naturally-occurring polio in the U.S. and significantly reduced the number of cases of measles, diphtheria, rubella, pertussis and other diseases. But despite these efforts, today tens of thousands of people in the U.S. still die from these and other vaccine-preventable diseases.

August is the perfect time to remind family, friends, co-workers, and those in the community to catch up on their vaccinations. Parents are enrolling their children in school, students are entering college, and healthcare workers are preparing for the upcoming flu season.

West Virginia has 383 health care provider sites including county health departments, community health centers, school based health centers and private practitioners that participate in the Vaccines for Children Program which ensures immunizations for all children that may not otherwise be able to receive them due to financial barriers.

Vaccines offer safe and effective protection from infectious diseases. By staying up-to-date on the recommended vaccines, individuals can protect themselves, their families and friends and their communities from serious, life-threatening diseases.

Awareness is the first step in protecting yourself. If you need further information, contact your physician, local health department or the West Virginia Immunization Program at (800) 642-3634.