

Indiana's State Health Department Partners with NFL Team to Raise Awareness of Seasonal Flu

The Indiana State Department of Health partnered with the Indianapolis Colts to raise seasonal flu awareness through the "Join Blue, Prevent the Flu" campaign.

Since 2014, the Indiana State Department of Health (ISDH) and the Indianapolis Colts have raised awareness about seasonal flu through the "Join Blue, Prevent the Flu" campaign. The campaign utilizes targeted messaging and multiple mediums, including print materials, social media platforms and commercials, to encourage Hoosiers to get a flu vaccine.

Increasing statewide flu immunization uptake among middle-aged adults became a priority for ISDH after its immunization program and the Epidemiology Resource Center reviewed data from CDC's FluVaxView and surveillance data on seasonal flu activity in Indiana. According to this data, middle-aged adults had lower flu immunization rates, as compared to children, adolescents, and older adults. From 2012 to 2013, approximately 32.8 percent of Indiana adults 18-64 years old received a flu vaccination, compared to 53.1 percent of children and adolescents, and 64.6 percent of adults 65 years or older.¹

- In 2012-2013, 32 percent of Indiana adults 18-64 years old received a flu vaccination.¹
- In 2014-2015, 36 percent of Indiana adults 18-64 years old received a flu vaccination.¹

ISDH identified the Indianapolis Colts as a potential partner during discussions on how best to increase flu vaccination coverage among middle-aged adults.

Steps Taken:

- ISDH contacted the Indianapolis Colts to gauge the team's interest in partnering with the health department to increase seasonal flu awareness. When approaching the Colts, ISDH used FluVaxView data to describe the problem, the purpose of the initiative, and explain the potential benefits of a campaign designed to increase flu vaccination rates among middle-aged adults. Football season lined up nicely to the buildup and execution of influenza vaccination season.
- After obtaining demographic information about Colts season ticketholders, ISDH determined that these ticketholders were likely in the target age group.
- ISDH used discretionary immunization funds to contract with the Colts, establishing a governmental-private partnership to raise awareness of seasonal flu. Since not all governmental agencies are permitted to partner with private entities, ISDH took steps to confirm that this type of partnership was allowed. While discretionary funds are utilized, the Colts provide advertising time and facilities in-kind.
- ISDH staff met with the Colts to develop a course of action and discuss outreach efforts and activities. To educate the public, ISDH developed a new slogan, "Join Blue, Prevent the Flu," building on the existing "Clean, Cover and Contain" campaign's key messages about preventing the spread of influenza. ISDH initially approached the team with the idea of using of mirror clings and an ad in the Scout (Colts game day program) to promote proper handwashing, and the Colts offered more ways to expand the reach of the campaign, including messages on the jumbo Tron, marketing in the

lobbies and bathrooms, promotional commercials, key ISDH presence at the Bleed Blue Blood Drive and Health Fair and booth space a pre-determined Colts games. The campaign materials are displayed during many other events held at Lucas Oil Stadium in addition to football games.

Results:

- Each year, the campaign has grown and expanded. During the first two years, outreach efforts included developing printed materials, signs, commercials, and promotional videos to raise awareness of seasonal flu. The Colts also published game day programs and recap stats containing seasonal flu information. ISDH produced a video featuring former Colts quarterback Matt Hasselbeck and state health commissioner Dr. Jerome Adams to address misconceptions regarding antibiotics and the flu. The ISDH has been able to capture knowledge, attitudes and beliefs survey data on influenza and antibiotic resistance by having booths at a game and collecting the data.
- In April 2016, in partnership with the Colts and pharmaceutical organizations, ISDH hosted an immunization awards banquet at the Colts practice facility.
- ISDH has received positive feedback from the community regarding flu outreach efforts in collaboration with the Colts, and data shows an increase in immunization uptake among middle-aged adults in Indiana. Flu vaccination coverage for Indiana adults 18-64 years old has continuously increased since 2012.¹ Figure 1 provides flu vaccination estimates for children and adolescents, middle-aged adults, and older adults in Indiana between 2012 and 2015. ISDH is considering expanding the campaign to incorporate information about other vaccines, such as meningococcal and MMR vaccines, based on current state immunization trends.

"Join Blue, Prevent the Flu" Campaign

Printed Materials:

- [Hand Washing Sign](#) and [Hand Sanitizer Sign](#)
- [Hand Washing Mirror Cling](#)
- [Colts Gameday Program Ad](#)
- [Snort, Sniffle, Sneeze, No Antibiotics Please! Poster](#)
- [Colts and ISDH Game Day Recap Stats](#)

Commercials and Videos:

- [Colts Timeout Commercial](#)
- [ISDH Commissioner Jerome Adams and Matt Hasselbeck Discuss Antibiotics and the Flu](#)
- ["Join Blue, Prevent the Flu" Game Plan](#)

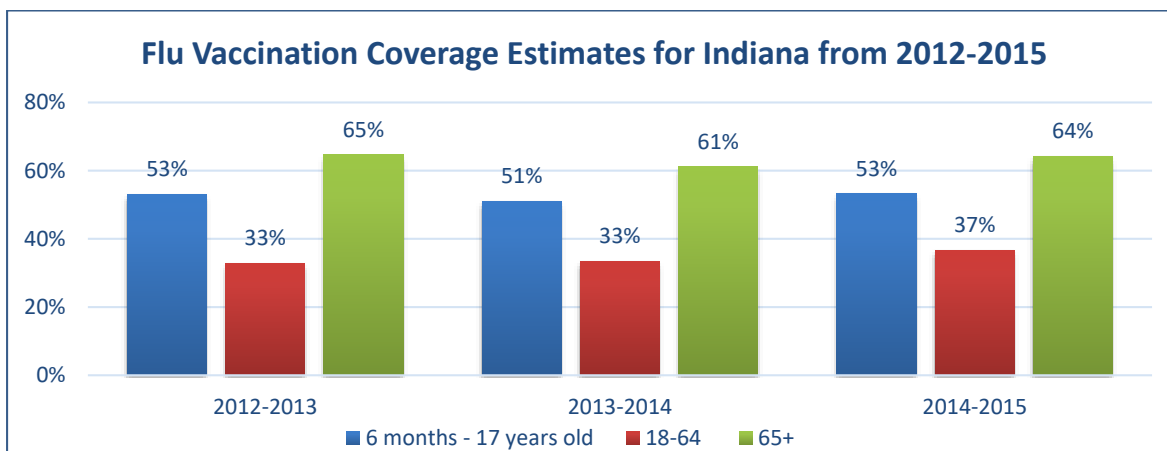


Figure 1. Based on data from CDC's 2010-11 through 2014-15 State, Regional and National Vaccination Trend Report.¹

Lessons Learned:

ISDH identified three elements key to the campaign's success:

1. **Having and utilizing data to support the initiative.** Data on flu vaccination coverage allowed ISDH to look at current trends, identify areas for improvement, and communicate to others the importance of improving flu immunization uptake among a target group.
2. **Developing a clear vision and effective messaging.** ISDH emphasized the importance of having a clear vision and effective messaging for the campaign before meeting with potential partners. A clear vision should include what the state health department is trying to do and how partners can support it. Messages should be clear, concise, engaging and appropriate for the target audience. Non-health partners can look to the health department for guidance and expertise in developing effective public health communications tools.
3. **Staying engaged and keeping open communication.** Ensuring all partners remain engaged and involved is key. Active communication between partners helps establish respect and trust, and allows the partnership to be successful and flourish.

Other Considerations:

- It may be more difficult for some states to solidify a contractual agreement for this type of nontraditional partnership. Prior to reaching out to potential partners, it is important to review if governmental-private partnerships are permitted in your state, as well as the policies and regulations surrounding these partnerships.
- Remember to take into account partners' schedules. ISDH experienced scheduling conflicts between the state health commissioner, the Colts staff, and Colts football games. Recognizing this as a challenge, ISDH began reaching out to the Colts earlier in the year and before the start of the season.

For more information:

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¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "2010-11 through 2014-15 State, Regional, and National Vaccination Trend Report." Available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/fluview/reportshtml/trends/index.html>. Accessed 11-20-2016.