



Office of the
Washington
State Auditor

Common Barriers to Compliance with Student Immunization Requirements

Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee

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Key audit findings

- Washington does not know its true vaccination rate
- Some principals chose not to exclude out-of-compliance students
- Schools with greater compliance actively engaged parents and monitored and reviewed immunization compliance documents
- Schools and districts with lower compliance rates can do more

Concerns over student immunizations prompted this audit



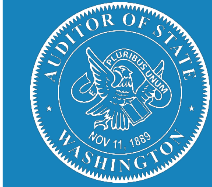
- Vaccine-preventable diseases continue to impact community health in Washington
- State public health experts set a goal: 95% vaccination coverage
- All schools must send Department of Health (DOH) their School Immunization Status reports annually
- DOH data can identify pockets of risk, and help focus vaccination coverage efforts
- Washington relies on school administrators to ensure families comply with state immunization requirements



The audit asked...

- Why are noncompliance rates for student immunizations high for some school districts?
- What are common barriers to families vaccinating their children, and how can school districts help minimize them?

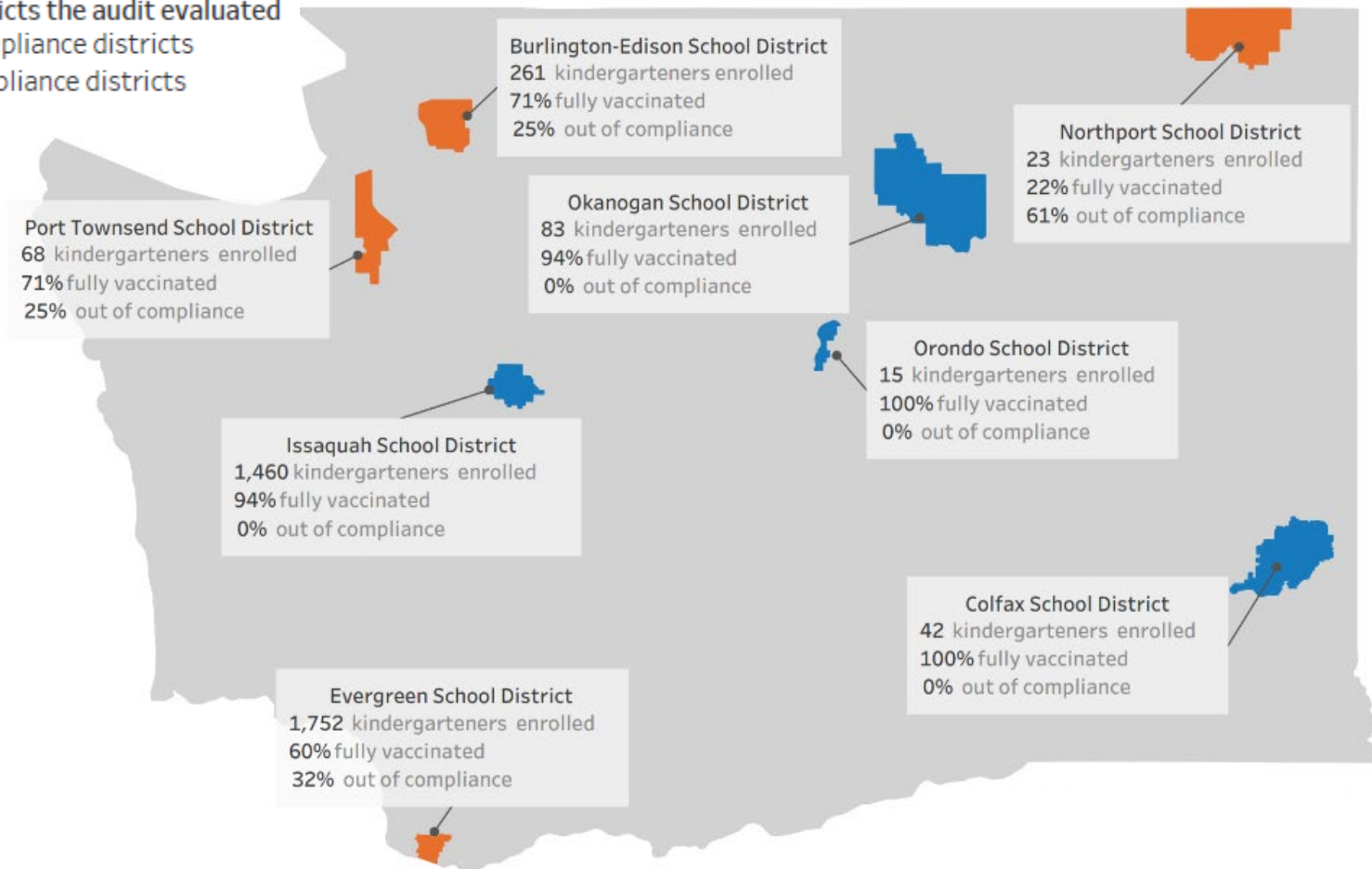




Four high-compliance and four low-compliance school districts in this audit

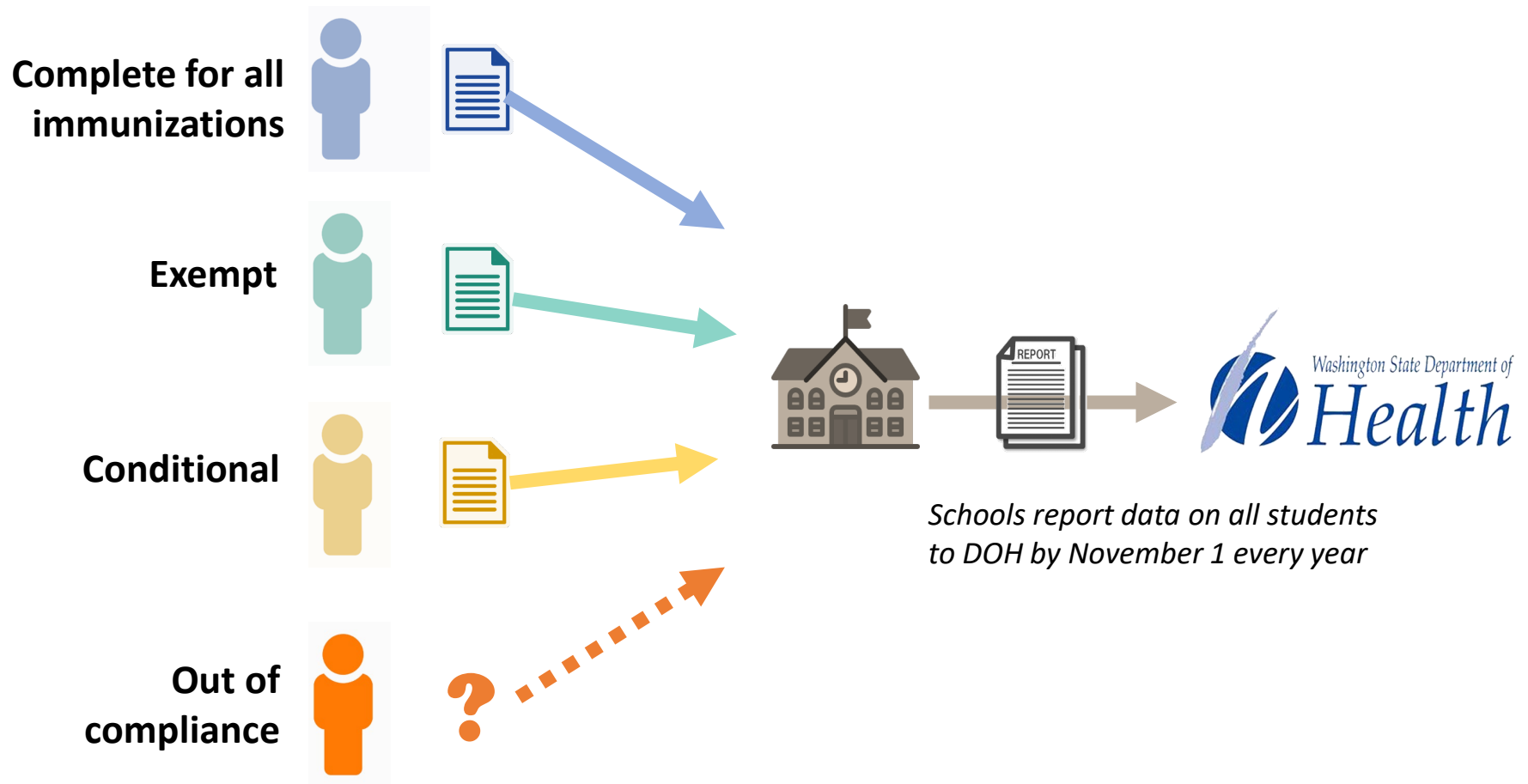
School districts the audit evaluated

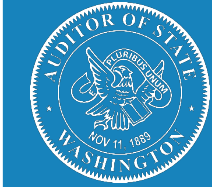
- High compliance districts
- Low compliance districts





Schools place a student's immunization compliance status in 1 of 4 categories



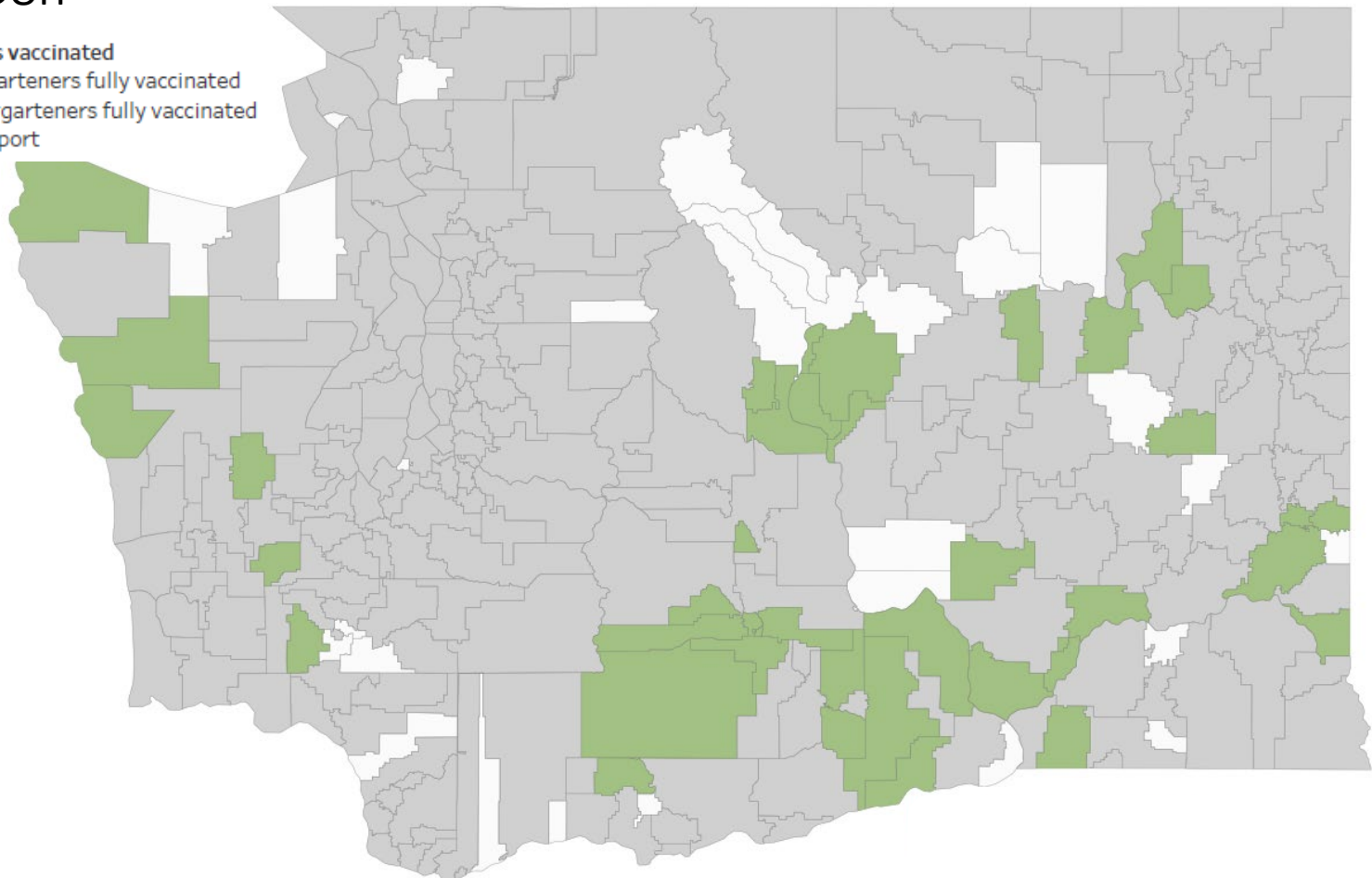


Washington does not know its true vaccination rate for two key reasons

Not all school districts reported their public school immunization data to DOH

Percent of kindergarteners vaccinated

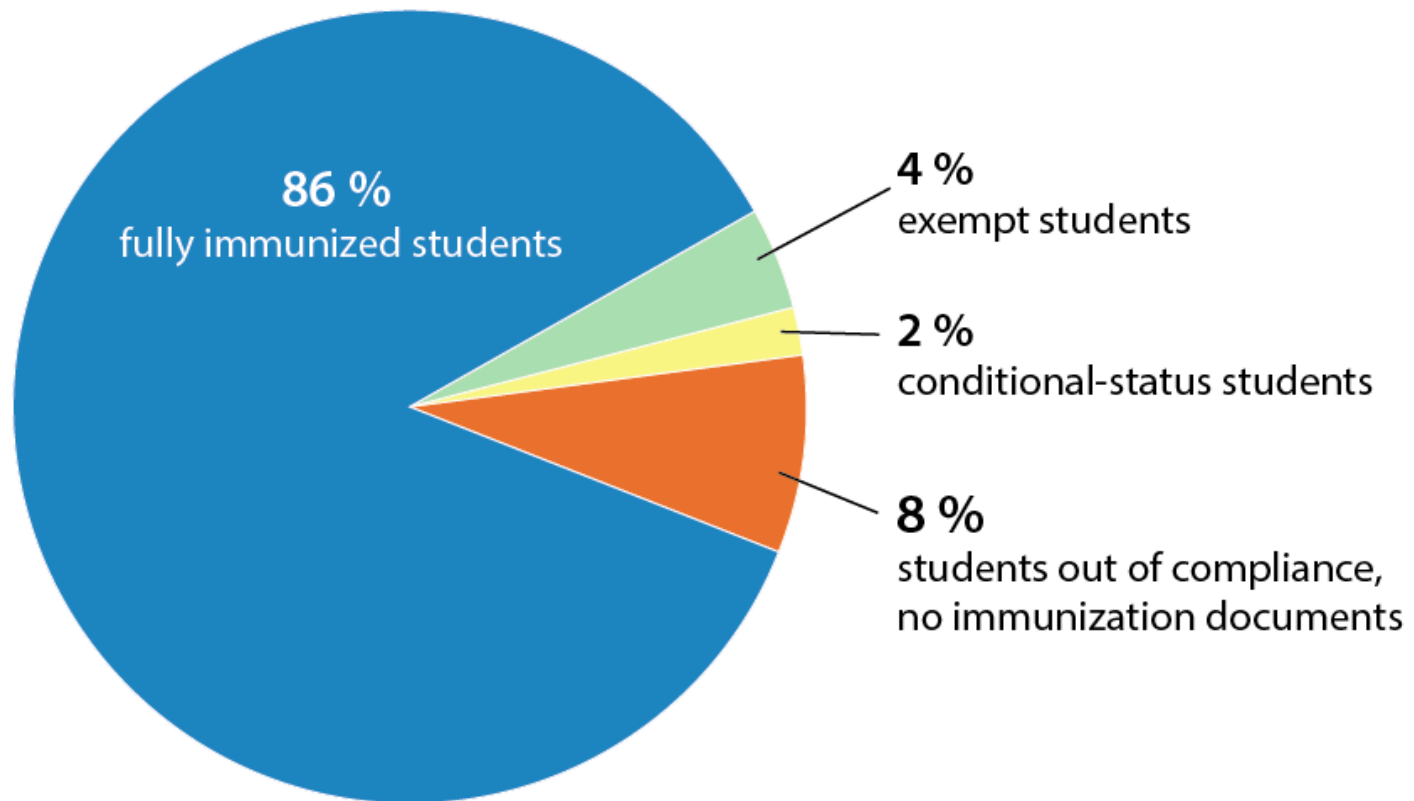
- At least 95% of kindergarteners fully vaccinated
- Less than 95% of kindergarteners fully vaccinated
- Districts that did not report





Washington does not know its true vaccination rate for two key reasons

Eight percent of all kindergarteners in public schools lacked complete immunization or exemption documents





State law requires proof of student immunization or exemption

- To attend school, a student must hand in documentation that he or she is either:
 - ✓ Fully immunized
 - ✓ Has a certificate of exemption

State law requires school administrators to exclude students until one of these requirements has been met





Some principals chose not to exclude out-of-compliance students

They did so because exclusion:

- ✘ Could result in parents taking their children out of school
- ✘ Is contrary to the schools' purpose, which is to provide an education to students
- ✘ Places a burden on school sta
- ✘ May reduce school funding



Schools that actively engaged parents have higher compliance rates



Successful activities included:

- Telling parents exclusion is a legal requirement
- Using tools and languages that reach the district's population
- Reminding parents about immunization requirements early, often and year round
- Sending parents frequent reminders about missing immunization records
- Explaining all options, including an exemption or providing results of a titer test

Actively monitoring and reviewing students' progress increased compliance

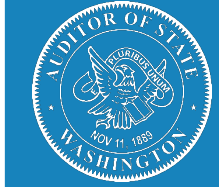


In addition to closely working with parents, high-compliance school districts:

- ✓ Developed and reviewed **internal reports** on immunization records
- ✓ Had **regular meetings** to discuss student immunization status
- ✓ Developed and used a **calendar** devoted to vaccination outreach
- ✓ Assigned staff with **clear roles and responsibilities** to monitor student records

Schools with lower compliance rates generally did not use these strategies to the same degree

- ✓ Incomplete information to parents
- ✓ Infrequent or insufficient follow-up on conditional status students
- ✓ Inadequately trained and insufficient number of school staff



School districts must find their own way forward to hold principals accountable



- No oversight responsibility to ensure schools follow all requirements related to immunization
- Some out-of-compliance students may not be excluded
- Oversight by district and school administrators is particularly important



Schools can help parents overcome some of the barriers

Barriers	Districts' efforts
Limited access to vaccination resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Providing transportation for students to clinics• Opening on-site vaccination clinic• Scheduling appointments for students
Parents who choose not to vaccinate their children or vaccinate on a delayed schedule	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Building relationships with parents• Providing information to address parents' concerns
Language barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Providing interpretation services• Providing information in multiple languages



Recommendations

For all audited districts and schools:

- Help ensure parents are aware of state immunization requirements and the consequences of noncompliance
- Provide information in languages other than English when appropriate
- Develop clearly documented roles and responsibilities related to immunization compliance and monitoring
- Schools should exclude students who are out of compliance as is required by the law (RCW 28A.210.120)
- Districts should hold schools accountable for following the law

Contact Information



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