

VCH Kindergarten Immunization Strategy

Western Canada Immunization Forum 2026

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Territory Acknowledgement

Vancouver Coastal Health is committed to delivering exceptional care to 1.25 million people, including the First Nations, Métis and Inuit, within the traditional territories of the Heiltsuk, Kitasoo-Xai'xais, Lil'wat, Musqueam, N'Quatqua, Nuxalk, Samahquam, shíshálh, Skatin, Squamish, Tla'amin, Tsleil-Waututh, Wuikinuxv, and Xa'xtsa.

We wish to acknowledge that the land on which we gather is the traditional and unceded territory of the Coast Salish Peoples, including the x^wməθk^wəy'əm (Musqueam), Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh (Squamish) and səlilwətaɫ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.



Disclosure of Conflict of Interest

No Conflict of Interest:

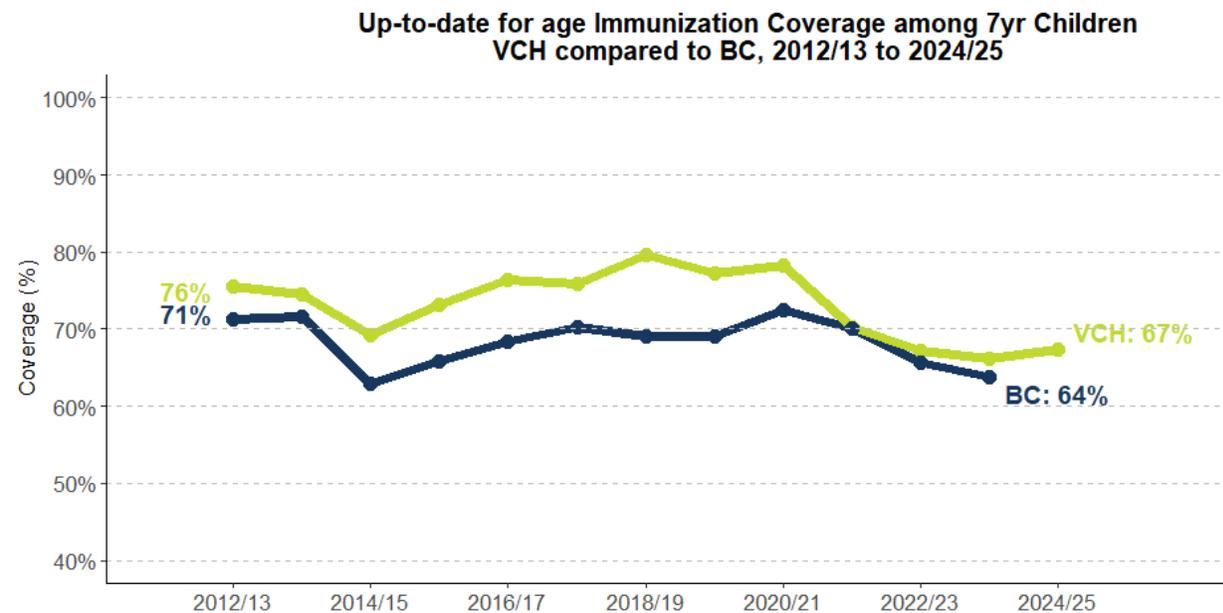
Jag and Lindsay do not have a financial relationship with any for-profit companies. We are both employees of Vancouver Coastal Health Authority.

Acknowledgement of expertise in the room

Though we have been invited to share our approach, we recognize that all public health jurisdictions represented at the forum likely have many similar approaches and perhaps a few novel strategies. We also look forward to learning from you.

Kindergarten immunization milestone is important to VCH public health

- As approximately 50% of infants and toddlers are immunized by primary care, this is the first opportunity for public health to connect with all children in the cohort.
- Collect immunization history
- Provide target antigens (DTP and MMRV)
- Offer catch up vaccines
- Improve coverage rates



Prepared by: Vancouver Coastal Health - Public Health, December 2025
Data source: (1) VCH Primary Access Regional Information System (PARIS); (2) BCCDC Childhood Immunization Coverage Dashboard

VCH Kindergarten Immunization Goals

Increase immunization coverage among Kindergarten (K) aged children across VCH:

- Develop and implement a coordinated regional workflow to support immunization practice
- Increase awareness of recommended milestone vaccines (e.g 4 –6 year-old) among parents prior to K entry and throughout school year
- Ensure year-round access to K immunization opportunities
- Provide at least one in-school K immunization clinic annually

VCH Kindergarten Immunization Program

1) School-Based Clinics:

- Offer at least one in-school clinic per year (Spring)
- Offer additional in-school opportunities for select higher needs schools/low immunization coverage schools (Winter)
- Offering in Spring allows K students to be more familiar with school, and more independent
- Engage parents/guardians using at least 3 personal attempts to obtain consent (text, email, phone calls, face to face)
- Digital consent pilot

2) VCH Site-Based Clinics:

- Offer site-based school aged clinic availability throughout the year, with increased availability during school breaks

VCH Kindergarten Immunization Program

3) Increasing awareness of milestone vaccines:

- Public Health Nurse engages with parents/guardians at school Kindergarten entry events
- At these events, Immunization Notices that contain child's immunization history and due antigens are distributed to parents/guardians (or mailed out if not present)

4) Promotion of K Immunizations:

- posters, newsletter inserts, VCH website and social media

Immunization Clinics

Get ready for Kindergarten!

At age 4, children need booster shots for:

- Diphtheria, Pertussis (Whooping Cough), Tetanus, Polio
- Measles, Mumps, Rubella, Varicella (Chicken Pox)

You can get immunizations through your local public health units

**To book an immunization
appointment**

Scan the QR code below



**For more information on
Kindergarten immunizations**

Scan the QR code below



Schedule of activities through the school year

| Fall | Winter/Spring | Summer + Spring Break + ProD Days |
|---|---|--|
| <p><u>Current Ks</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Collect K class lists and histories from schools; enter histories into PARIS - K promotional activities in schools (newsletters, poster, links to social media etc) | <p><u>Current Ks</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Immunize all outstanding Ks at school-based clinics (Spring) - Nurses may offer additional school clinics for elementary schools with increased needs or lower coverage rates (Winter) <p><u>Incoming Ks</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Obtain class lists for incoming K students (for Fall of same year) - PHNs attend school 'Welcome to K Events' <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Distribution of Immunization Notices and handouts with link to online immunization appointment booking - Mailout of Immunization Notices to parents/guardians not present at school K events | <p><u>Current and Incoming Ks</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Offer additional, condensed VCH site-based School Aged Clinics |

Offer school-age immunization clinics at health units throughout the year

PHN Participation at School Kindergarten Events to Promote Immunization

- Discuss immunization program with parents/guardians
- Distribution of Immunization Notices to parents/guardians
- Distribution of handouts with information on how to get children immunized
 - VCH clinic finder website, primary care providers, pharmacies and links to online school age clinic booking (links/QR code)
- Promotion of other public health messaging such as healthy child development

Healthy Kids, Happy Learners!



Vancouver Coastal Health



Public Health Tips for a Healthy Start to Kindergarten

Immunize your child before starting school



At age 4, children need booster shots for:

- Diphtheria, Pertussis (Whooping Cough), Tetanus, Polio
- Measles, Mumps, Rubella, Varicella (Chickenpox)

When you register your child for school, **submit their immunization record** to their school or to VCH.

To find an immunization location near you and learn how to submit records to VCH, see our [Find an Immunization Clinic](#) page.



Preventing spread of illness

Getting immunized and washing hands are the best ways to stop the spread of germs.

Help your children learn to **wash their hands** with soap and water (for at least 20 seconds - you can sing Happy Birthday!) **after using the washroom** and **before eating**.



When your child is sick

Children with fever, cough, or runny nose **should stay home until they are well enough to participate in regular activities**.



If your child has diarrhea or vomiting, they **can return to school when they no longer have any symptoms**.

Managing medical conditions at school

Let your school know if your child needs help with anaphylaxis (severe allergy), diabetes, seizures, asthma or any other medical needs. Our nurses and allied health providers help train school staff.



Public Health Tips for a Healthy Start to Kindergarten

Dental

- Brush their teeth twice a day with fluoride toothpaste
- Floss every day
- Drink water or milk instead of sugary drinks



Children should visit the dentist regularly, for many, that will be every 6 months.

Families may be able to get **free or low-cost dental care** through the *BC Healthy Kids Program* and *Canadian Dental Care Plan*.

Hearing

Hearing is important for children's learning and development.

Our hearing team **visits Kindergarten students in schools** to screen for hearing loss.



Mental Wellness

You can support your child

- Talk about feelings. Let them know **it's ok to feel sad, angry, or disappointed**.
- Help them learn ways to **feel better when they are upset**, like moving their body, spending time outside or with a friend, listening to music or drawing.
- Talk through challenges and listen **without judgement or trying to fix the problem**. Support them to find their own solutions.
- Model compassion, kindness, empathy, and gratitude.

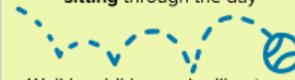


Physical Activity

Active kids have more energy, feel better, and are ready to learn.

We recommend helping your child get:

- **1 hr** of physical activity
- **9-11 hrs** of sleep
- **less than 2 hrs** of screen time, and
- **more movement, less sitting** through the day



Walking, biking and rolling to school is a fun way to get their daily activity.

For more ideas, see **Being Active:**



For more ideas, see **Supporting your child's mental wellness:**



Vision



We recommend **all children see an optometrist** to have an eye exam **before Kindergarten**.

BC Medical Services Plan covers an eye exam once a year for children under 19. Some eye clinics may charge an additional fee, so it's a good idea to call ahead and compare.

Healthy Eating

Eating different kinds of nutritious foods helps kids:

- Be ready to learn
- Feel good about themselves
- Feel good about their body

Eating well is also about **building healthy attitudes and behaviours** around food and eating.

For tips and healthy lunch ideas from our nutritionists, see **Lunches to Go:**



If you have questions about your child's immunizations or concerns about their transition to school, talk to your **doctor** or call your local public health unit to talk to your school's **Public Health Nurse**.



For more information about any of these topics, see **VCH Kindergarten:**



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In Conclusion - Increasing Access to K Immunization Opportunities

- Offer at least one school-based K clinic in Winter/Spring; two in-school clinics for schools with lower coverage rates or increased needs
- Families who are hard to reach are important to us: Public Health Nurses to reach and engage parents in a consent conversation using at least 3 personal contacts
- Online appointment booking access for all VCH site clinics
- All VCH sites offer routine clinics throughout the year with increased frequency during scheduled school breaks
- Immunization Notices (containing complete immunization history and due antigens) distributed to all parents of K children.

THANK YOU

An aerial photograph of a coastal region. In the background, there are several large, forested mountains under a clear blue sky. The middle ground shows a large body of water, likely a bay or fjord, with numerous small, forested islands scattered throughout. The foreground features a rocky coastline with waves breaking onto a sandy beach. The water is a deep blue-green color, and the overall scene is bathed in the warm light of late afternoon or early morning.

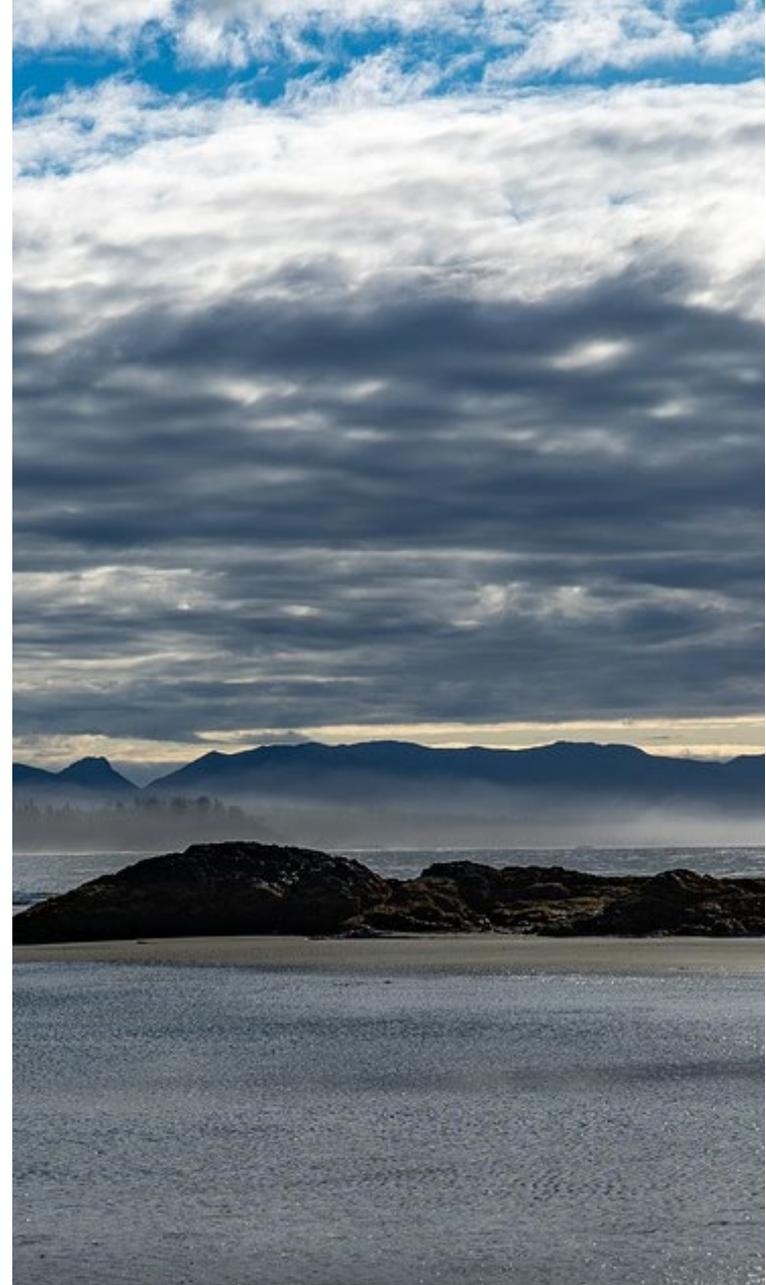
Boosting Childhood Immunization Rates Through School-Based Access in Kindergarten

Disclosure

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We are employees of Island Health Authority and declare that we have no financial, personal, or professional disclosures or conflicts of interest to report.





Island Health is committed to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Island Health offers programs and services on the unceded and traditional territories of the Coast Salish, Nuu-chah-nulth and Kwakwaka'wakw Peoples. As an organization, we are committed to cultural safety and humility and we demonstrate this through our actions to address Indigenous specific racism, systemic racism and the ongoing impacts of colonialism.

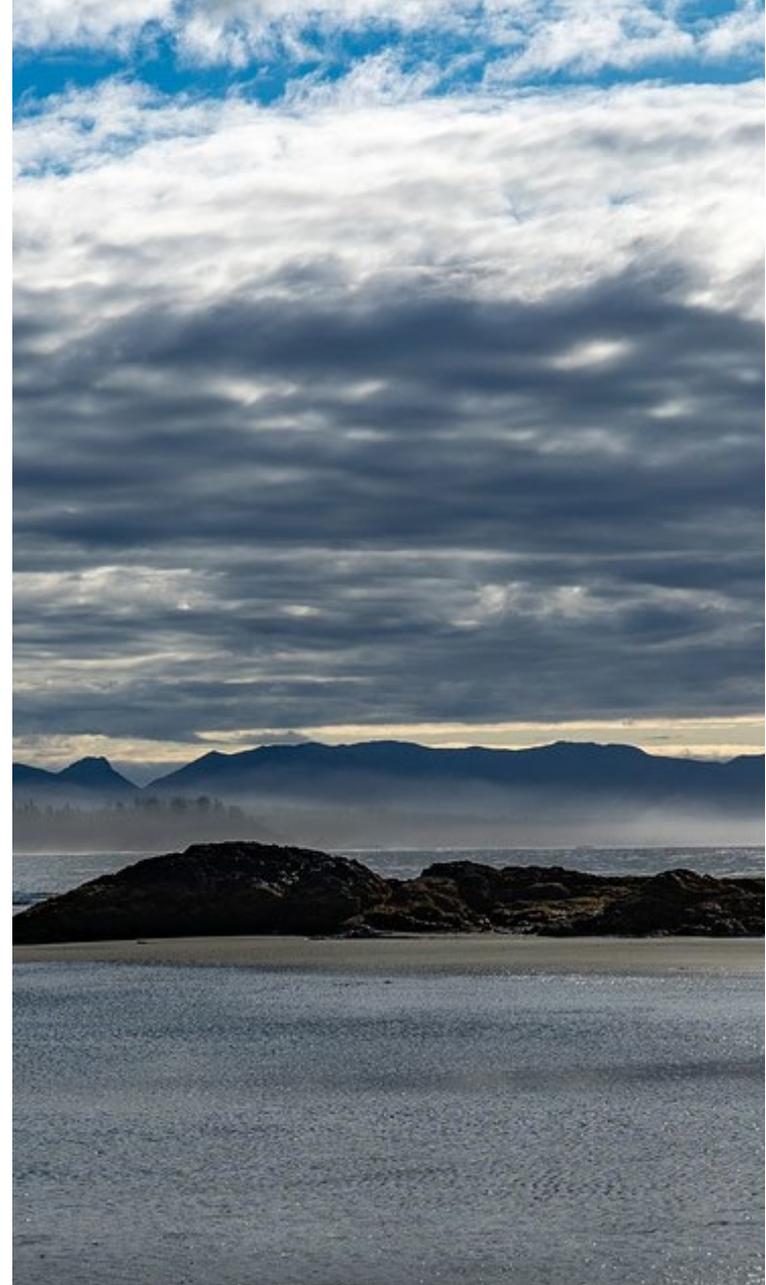
Territorial Acknowledgement

Before Canada and BC were formed, Indigenous peoples lived in balance and interconnectedness with the land and water in which the necessities of life are provided. Health disparities persist, which are due to the impacts of colonization and Indigenous-specific racism. Healthy lands, healthy people. Island Health acknowledges and recognizes these homelands and the stewardship of Indigenous peoples of this land. It is with respect and humility we continue to work toward building our relationship.

Photo captured of the redwood cedar trees on unceded, ancestral Nuu-chah-nulth territory

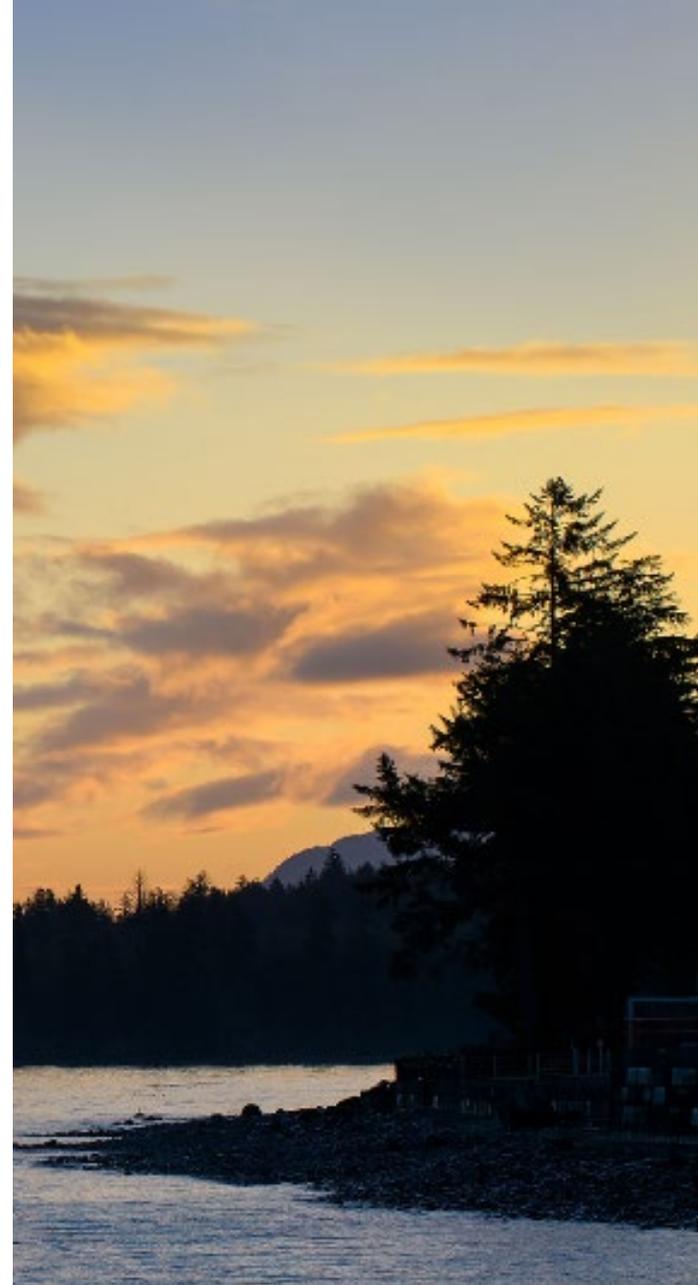
Learning Objectives

1. Describe school-based strategies for increasing vaccine uptake at 7-Years of age.
2. Identify the key steps in implementing kindergarten school-based immunization programs.



Overview

- ✓ Background
- ✓ The why and how of change
- ✓ Successes and Challenges
- ✓ Next Steps
- ✓ Questions?



Kindergarten Immunization Gap 2016 – 2020

2 year: 73.1% (\geq BC avg)

✓ Universal 0-2 reminder-recall system

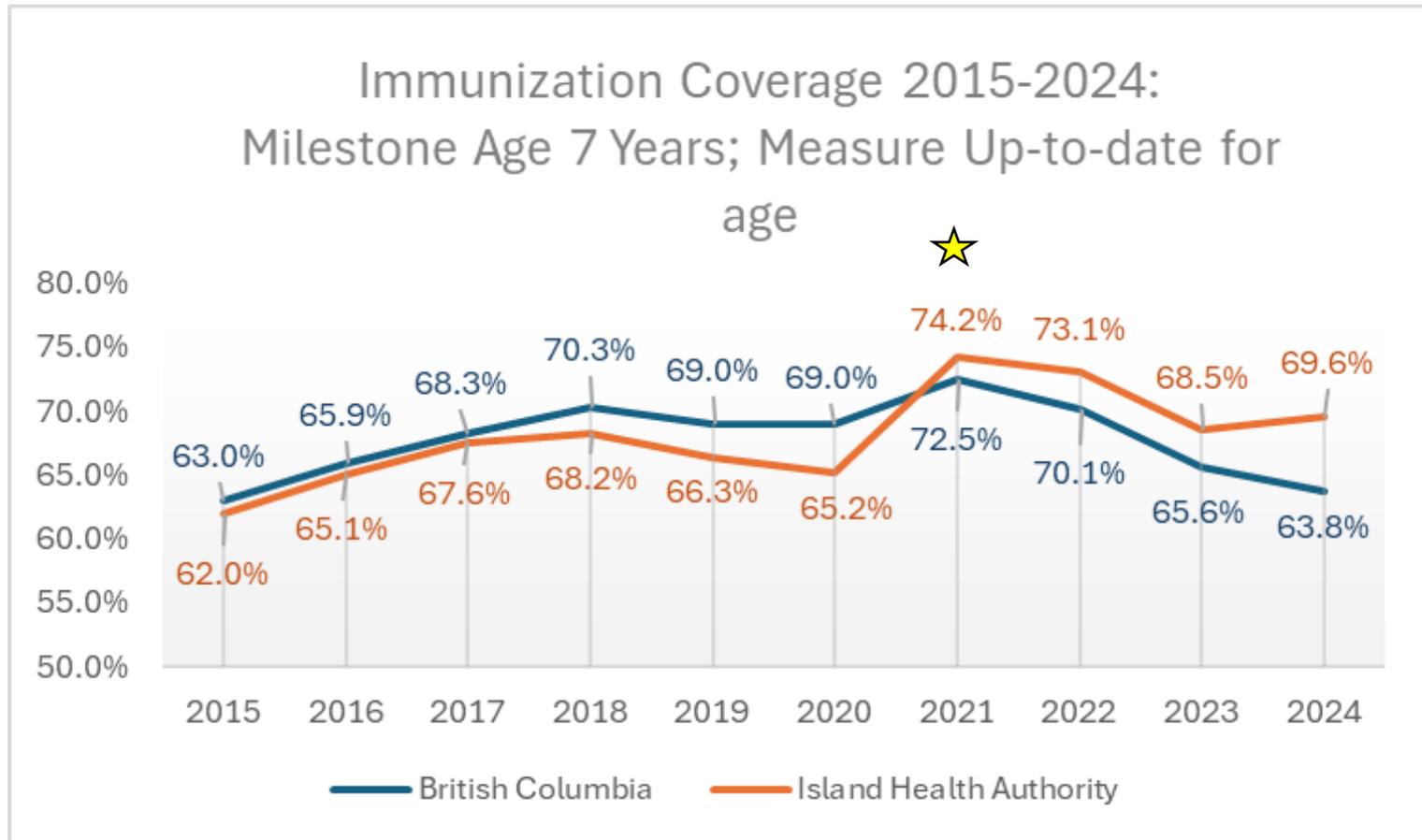
⚠ Inconsistent reminders at 4 years

✗ No universal school-entry process

7 year: 66.5% (\leq BC Avg)

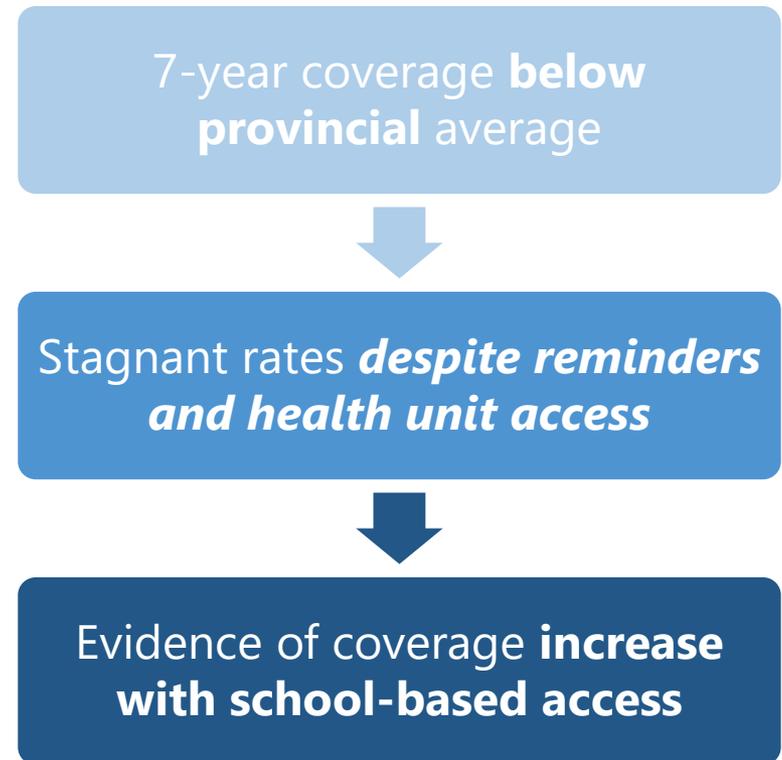
Outcome: Lack of consistent reminders and universal school-entry checks contributed to a 7% decline in kindergarten immunization coverage.

From Gaps to Gains: the Case for Change



(British Columbia Centre for Disease Control, 2025)

Understanding the Gap: Access as the Missing Link



Implementing the Change

ADKAR



Awareness

Ensure awareness of issues



Desire

Incentivize with benefits and consequences



Knowledge

Know how to create and how to sustain change



Ability

Closing the skills gap that limits change

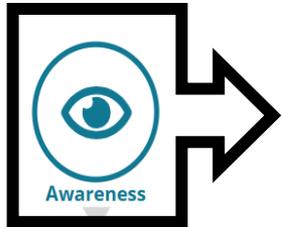


Reinforcement

Measuring and rewarding wins

Prosci. (n.d.). ADKAR® Change Management Model.
<https://www.prosci.com/methodology/adkar>

Implementing the Change: Awareness



- Low immunization rates
- Reduce vaccine-preventable disease outbreaks
- Barriers to current strategy



Implementing the Change: **Desire**



- Promotes health and wellness among students
- Reduce barriers by going to the students
- School is a safe, familiar space



Implementing the Change: Knowledge



Awareness



Desire



Knowledge

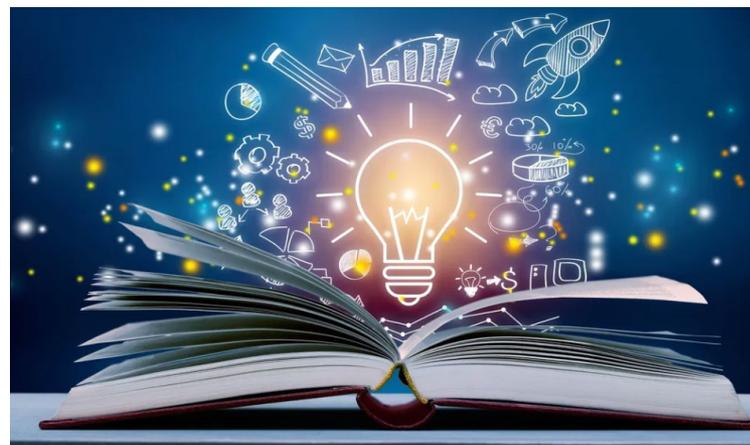


Ability



Reinforcement

- Workflow and resources for public health staff
- School resources
- Parent resources



Implementing the Change: **Ability**



Awareness



Desire



Knowledge



Ability



Reinforcement



- Support for public health staff
- Support for school staff
- Access to supplies

Implementing the Change: Reinforcement



Awareness



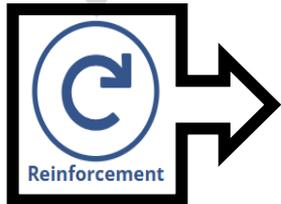
Desire



Knowledge



Ability



"It went great. We will do it again."

School Staff

"It often goes smoother without the parent present."

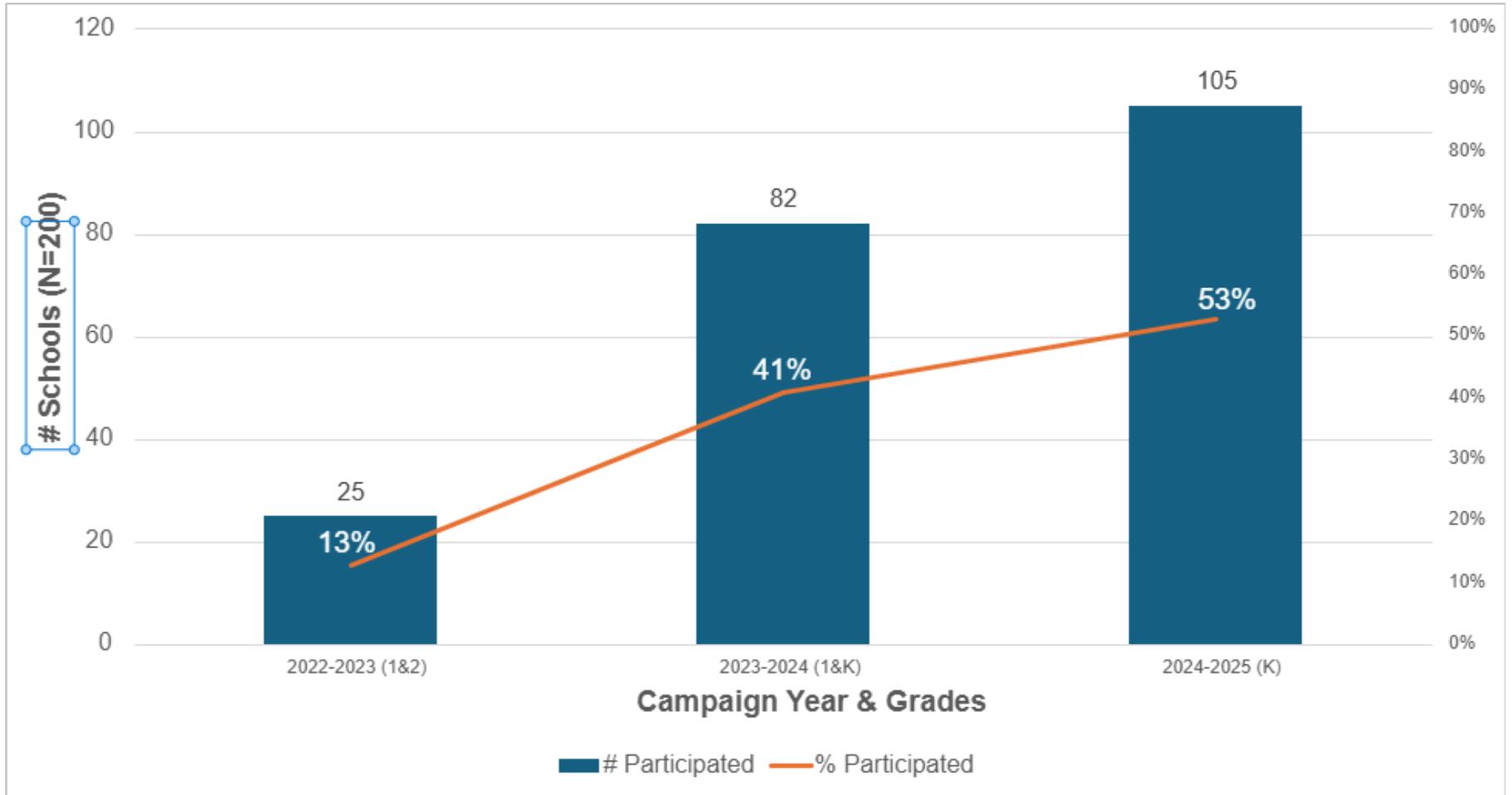
Public Health Nurse

Appreciation for not needing to take time off work to be present.

Parent

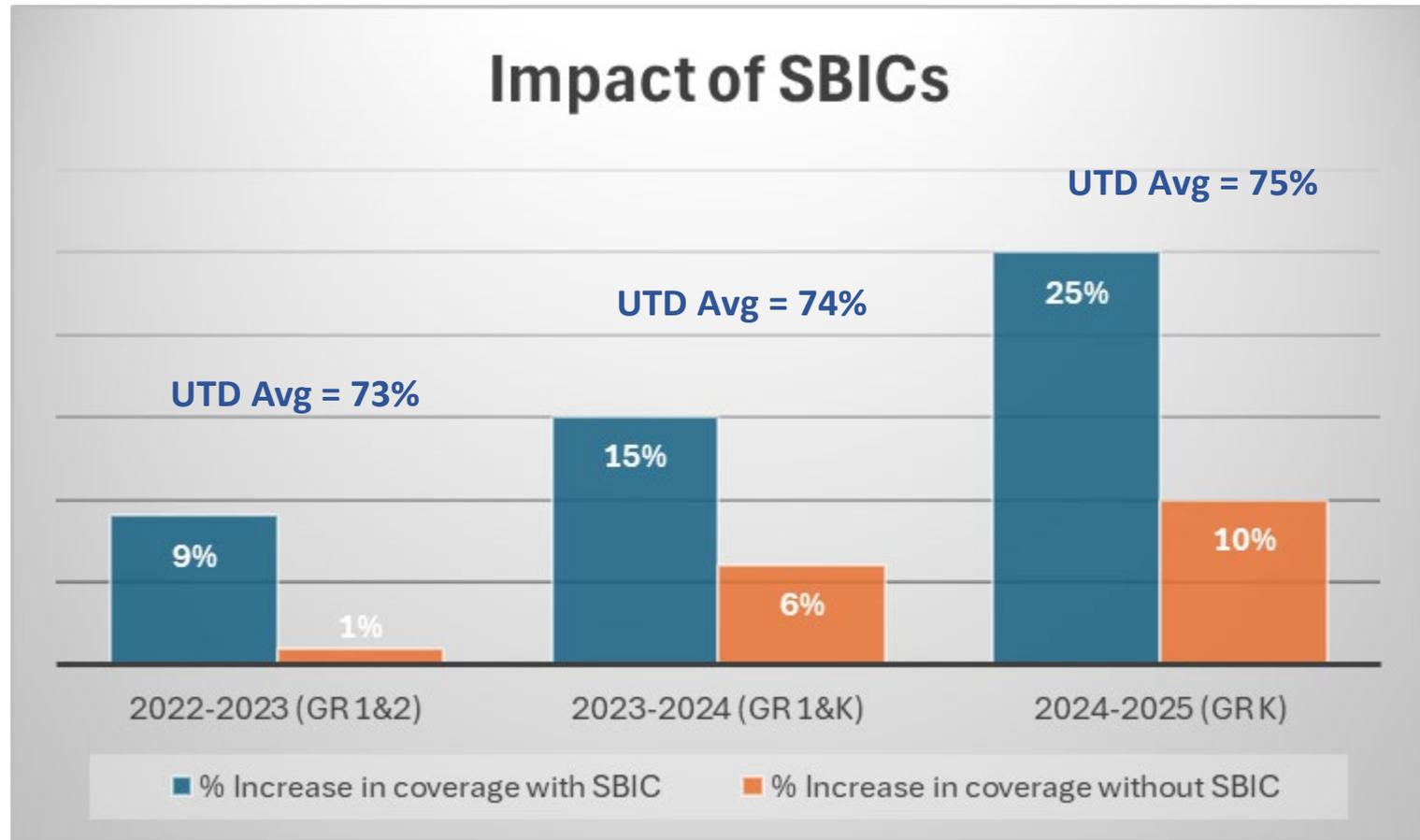
- Evaluation of K school-based clinics
- Data analysis
- School participation rate
- Routine, universal public health work

Increasing Universal School Participation



Population and Public Health, Island Health, 2025

Increasing Coverage with School Clinics

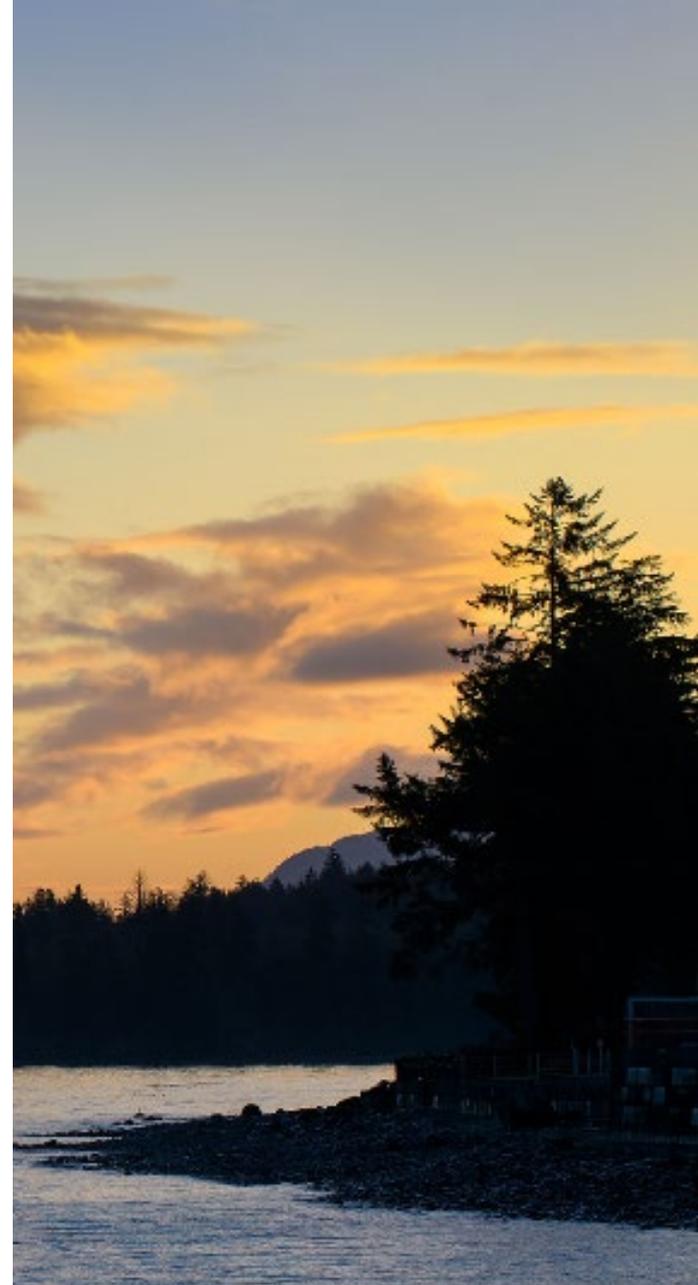
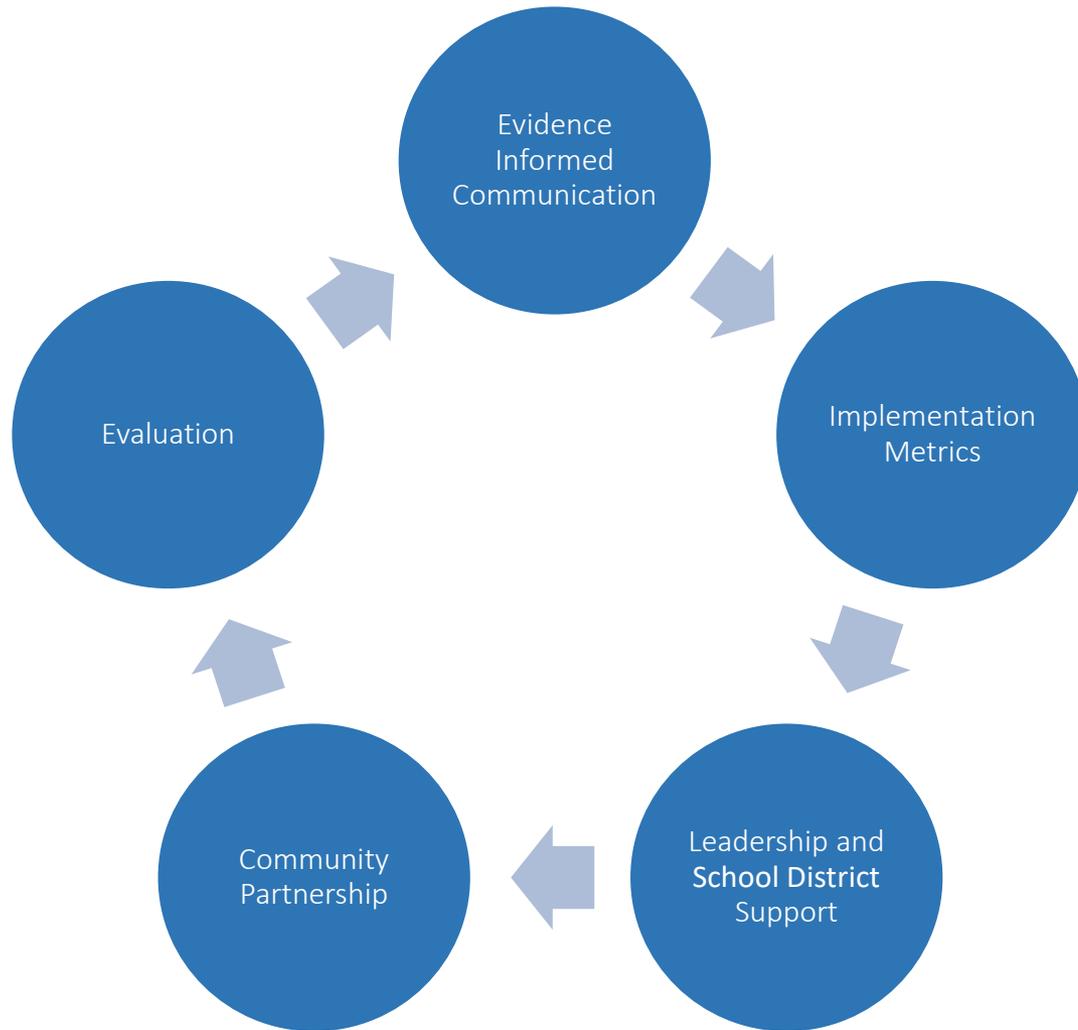


Population and Public Health, Island Health Authority, 2025.

School-Entry Pathway: 2025/2026

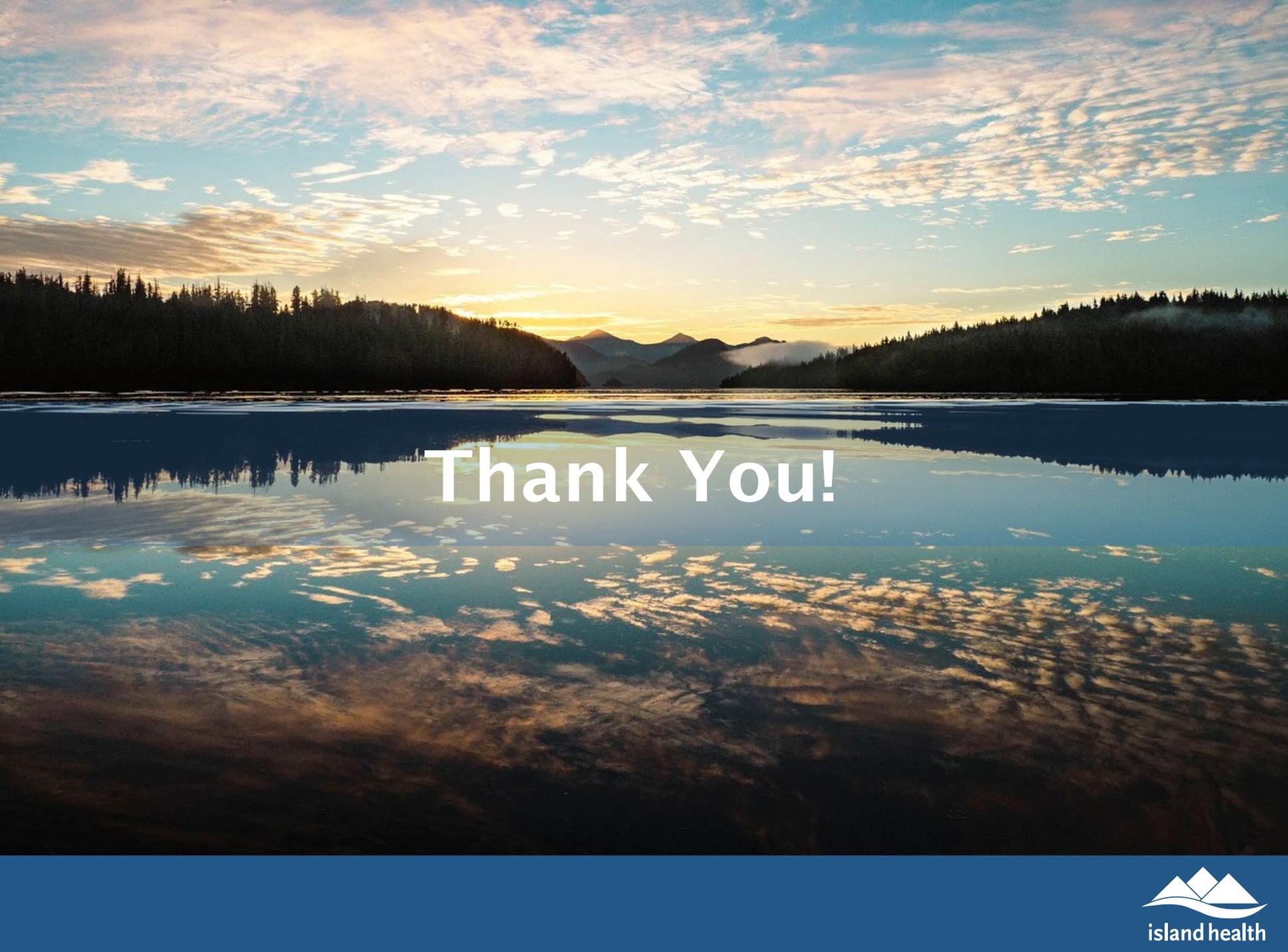


Reflections to Shape Our Path Ahead:





Do You Have Any
Questions For Us?



Thank You!