

Addressing low vaccine uptake in rural Massachusetts: Perspectives from local school nurses and public health nurses



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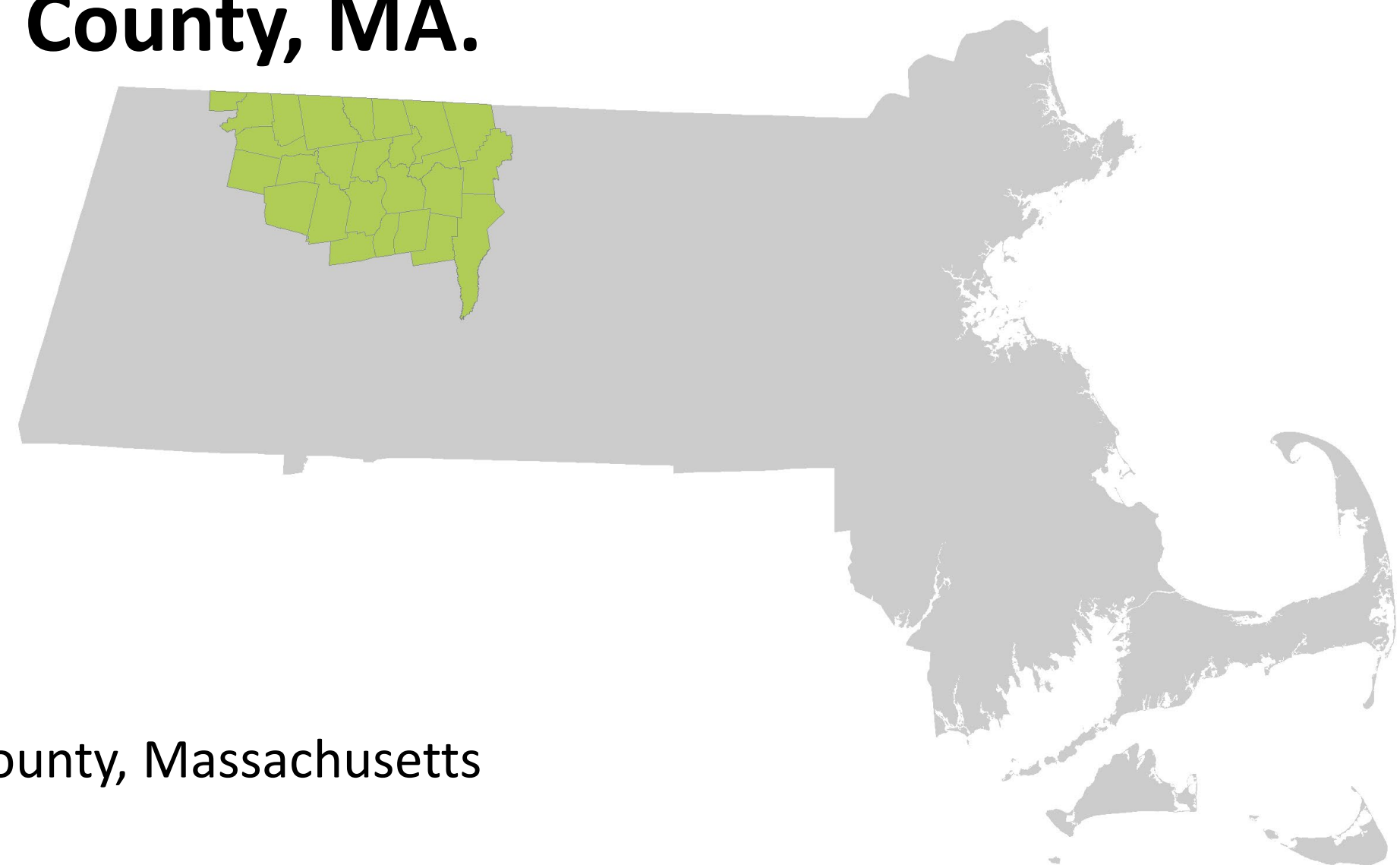
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Background

- In Franklin County (western Massachusetts) **only 83% of 7th graders and 70% of 11th graders are up-to-date on school required vaccines.**
 - In comparison, in more urban counties, over 90% of 7th and 11th graders are up-to-date on required vaccines. [Data source: MDPH]
- Informal school nurse survey found (winter '22/'23)
 - **Only 4 out of 10 nurses felt their school met state standards of school immunization requirements**
 - Relationships with parents is an area of unease (don't want to damage, would like to strengthen)
- Addressing low vaccine uptake will require multilevel efforts: both **school nurses** and **public health nurses** have an important role to play

Objective

To explore perspectives of school nurses and public health nurses on their role in vaccine promotion in Franklin County, MA.



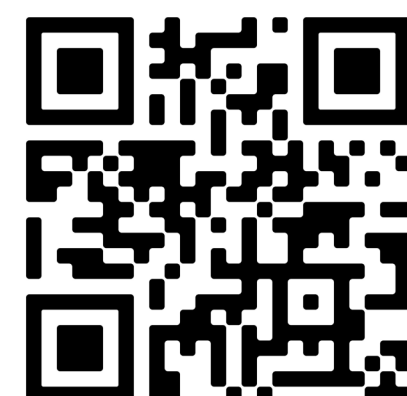
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Acknowledgements

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Methods

- We collected input from school - and public health nurses on vaccine promotion, using a semi-structured qualitative data collection exercise during a standing meeting of regional nurses in August 2023, prior to the school year's start.
- With online brainstorming software, we collected data and facilitated discussion on (1) challenges, (2) potential facilitators and (3) community-level barriers. We used open coding to identify themes emerging from the short-answer responses to these questions.

Results

School nurses' and public health nurses' perspectives on vaccine promotion

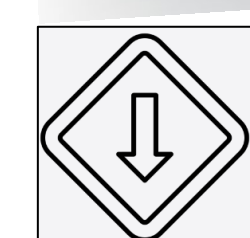
Challenges



LOGISTICAL

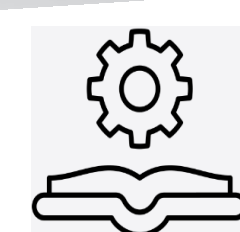
"Obtaining vaccination information from parents"

"Gathering/receiving health records"



LOW PRIORITIZATION

"Buy-in from school and local community. Immunization is not a high priority while challenges in educational settings are growing."

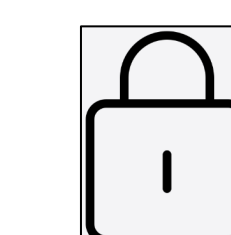


KNOWLEDGE

"As a [public health nurse] who does not usually provide child/adolescent vaccines, getting access to the vaccine and needing more time to learn needed info for providing the vaccine."

Potential Facilitators

"Getting school health providers to provide onsite immunizations with other school-based health clinician services. It would be great to increase access for COVID-19, HPV"



ACCESS

"MD offices are not easily accessible"



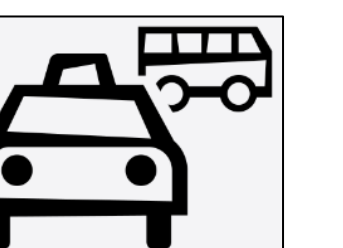
RESOURCES FOR FAMILIES

"Info flyers on why vaccinations are important"

"Is there an 800 number for parents to call to check easily on their child's records and then leads to info on vaccine clinics?"

Community Barriers

TRANSPORTATION



"Transportation/ access to medical appointments"

Franklin County is "car dependent with very limited or no access to public transportation" (Housing and Transportation Affordability Index)



CHALLENGES WITH PRIMARY CARE

"Primary care offices are overwhelmed... hard to get appointments, then when appointments happen, there's so much to talk about that vaccines get missed"

Conclusions

Focus on what is actionable:

- Provide training to school nurses and local public health nurses on the Massachusetts Immunization Registry and host meetings between nurses and MIIS staff to discuss potential ways to improve systems for ease of use
- Create accessible materials for parents that can be disseminated by nurses

Multi-level and multi-component interventions are needed:

- Identify partner across the state/region to address larger challenges
 - For example, focus on improving wait-times at primary care offices *and* explore partnerships/funding to be able to provide vaccine clinics at schools