

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 23, 2023

For further information contact:

Sara Dillard, [sarad@vaccinateindiana.org](mailto:sarad@vaccinateindiana.org)

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**Indiana Immunization Coalition Collaborates with Merck to Increase Vaccination Equity in Indiana's Northern 33 Counties to Address Health Disparities.**

*Indiana Immunization Coalition (IIC) announced a new \$1 million initiative with funding support from Merck (known as MSD outside the United States and Canada) to increase access to healthcare services.*

In consultation with the Indiana Department of Health, IIC has identified four districts that are primarily rural, underserved, and face barriers to accessing health care. Of the counties in these districts, 19 have five or fewer Vaccines for Children providers, and 21 have populations designated as medically underserved.

IIC aims to promote healthy living, prevent illness, and empower community members to lead healthier lives by reducing transportation and cost barriers. Working with grassroots organizations in these communities, IIC will create new access points to preventative health services.

Lisa Robertson, Executive Director of IIC, said, *“We are excited to work with Merck and our state and local partners to increase access to healthcare and local resources. Every Hoosier community is important and deserves to be healthy, but this requires a concerted effort on everyone's part to reduce disparities and inequities that exist all over the state. Coming together as a group of concerned organizations is the best way to impact these communities at the local level.”*

The initiative will also be used to train healthcare workers on vaccine information and how to help reduce barriers to care.

*“Healthcare inequities, specifically when it comes to access to care, can detrimentally impact underserved communities,”* said Josette Gbemudu, Executive Director, Health Equity at Merck. *“To address these inequities, it's critical that we come together to support efforts at the*

*community level to remove barriers to care and strengthen health systems. We are so proud to be working with Indiana Immunization Coalition to advance health equity.”*

For more details about the initiative, contact 317-628-7116 or [clinic@vaccinateindiana.org](mailto:clinic@vaccinateindiana.org).

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