



NEWS RELEASE



For Immediate Release

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(11/5/25) Southern 7 Health Department Partners with Grandparents for Vaccines Initiative (Showcasing Real-Life Stories Before Vaccines)

With measles and pertussis cases at their highest levels in decades, this alone has created a renewed sense of urgency as reports show that 1 in 6 US parents are choosing not to vaccinate their children. In an effort to prevent life-threatening illnesses in the communities they serve, Southern 7 Health Department is partnering with the Grandparents for Vaccines initiative to take the vaccination conversation to a whole new generation.

Grandparents for Vaccines is a new, volunteer-led organization that launched on September 7th, Grandparents Day. Their first op-ed in Progressive Perspectives, “Why Grandparents Must Lead on Vaccines,” sparked an overwhelming response, showing that the call for grandparents’ voices in this national crisis resonates far beyond our own community. The organization is not led by policy, but by the story of lives, families, and generations at stake.

“One of the main reasons people don’t understand the need to vaccinate their children is because they’ve never experienced a life without vaccines,” said Shawna Rhine, Southern 7 Community Outreach Coordinator. “Grandparents have lived that life. Who better to help us understand it?”

Since the Grandparents for Vaccine launch, what began with just a few hundred sign-ups has now grown into thousands of grandparents nationwide, eager to share their stories. From accounts of polio trials, children lost to measles, and the profound relief when the Salk and Sabin vaccines changed everything, Grandparents remind us that vaccines are not abstract policy debates but lifelines across generations.

Arthur Levin, Founder and President of Grandparents for Vaccines explains, “This is a national movement of grandparents and allies using the power of memory, trust, and experience to protect the next generation. As an untapped resource, we are changing the conversation about vaccines—replacing fear and misinformation with stories, wisdom, and love. Together, we honor our legacy and shape a healthier future for every family.”

Many voices are now featured on the new Grandparents for Vaccines YouTube channel, a platform created to amplify never-before-shared experiences. As an untapped resource, Grandparents are changing the conversation about vaccines—replacing fear and misinformation with stories, wisdom, and love. Together, the Grandparents for Vaccines initiative honors our legacy and shape a healthier future for every family.

Southern 7 offers both Head Start and Early Head Start for income eligible families that live in the lower seven counties in Illinois. Head Start serves children age 3 to 5 and Early Head Start serves infants and children age 6 weeks to 3. Both

programs offer full-day enrollment, with Early Head Start available year-round. A home-based option is available for families if requested. Head Start has dual enrollment with Pre-K.

To learn more about Grandparents for Vaccines, visit grandparentsforvaccines.com or visit their [YouTube Channel](#). For Grandparents wanting to share their life-story before vaccines with others, visit grandparentsforvaccines.com/share-your-story/ or contact Shawnna Rhine at 618-634-2297 ext. 971161.

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