

**Immunization Records:
A Guide for Licensed Child Care
Operators in the Middlesex-London
Health Unit Area**



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Introduction

This document provides information and direction for licensed child care centres about the processes behind the screening and collection of immunization information for children attending licensed child care facilities.

Immunization records are necessary to control disease outbreaks. In the event of a communicable disease outbreak, accurate and complete immunization records help child care centres and Public Health Units quickly identify children who may be susceptible to the disease. Being organized will help control the outbreak and prevent further spread to other children, their families, and child care staff.

The Middlesex-London Health Unit will be reviewing the immunization status of all children attending child care centres and will educate guardians on how to report immunizations to both the Health Unit and the centre. Reviews by the Health Unit will occur at least once a year, but Health Unit nurses are available throughout the year to answer questions from child care centres and families regarding immunization schedules and records.

Ontario legislation states that it is the child care operator's responsibility to keep updated records for each child in attendance. Public Health also holds the information in a secure online provincial immunization database. The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has access to records through the database to calculate statistics on vaccine coverage for this population. Each child who attends licensed child care must have documented protection against these specific diseases:

- Pneumococcal disease
- Meningococcal-C
- Diphtheria
- Measles, Mumps, Rubella
- Tetanus
- Varicella (Chickenpox)
- Poliomyelitis
- Hib (h.influenzae-b)
- Pertussis (whooping cough)

Background

To protect the health of child care communities, Public Health Units and centre operators in Ontario are required by provincial law to ensure children attending licensed child care centres have up-to-date immunization records.

Your centre's requirements are legislated by the Child Care and Early Years Act (CCEYA). Ontario Regulation 137/15, Section 35 under the CCEYA

1. *"Every licensee shall ensure that before a child who is not in attendance at a school or private school, within the meaning of the Education Act, is admitted to a child care centre it operates or to a premises where it oversees the provision of home child care, and from time to time thereafter, the child is immunized as recommended by the local medical officer of health."*
2. *"Subsection (1) does not apply where a parent of the child objects to the immunization on the ground that the immunization conflicts with the sincerely held convictions of the parent's religion or conscience or a legally qualified medical practitioner gives medical reasons to the licensee as to why the child should not be immunized."*
3. *"Objections and medical reasons under subsection (2) shall be submitted in a form approved by the Minister."*

The Immunization for Children in Schools and Licensed Child Care Settings Protocol for Public Health Units (Ontario, 2018), states that the Board of Health (ie. Health Unit staff) shall:

- *"Assess, maintain records, and report on the immunization status of children enrolled in licensed child care setting, as defined in the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014".*
- *"Request and collect information from licensees in their jurisdiction which will assist in immunization assessment processes" (p. 3). The information that is to be collected is stated in the CCEYA, Ontario Regulation 137/15, Section 72:*
 1. *The name, date of birth and home address of the child.*
 2. *The names, home addresses and telephone numbers of the parents of the child.*
- *"Ensure that all statements of medical exemptions or statements of conscience or religious belief by the board of health are entered into Panorama (the provincial immunization database)"*

Responsibilities and Processes

New Registrants:

When families register children into your care, it is important to inform them that they must provide their child's immunization record to both the child care centre and the Health Unit.

1. Provide new families with the Health Unit's New Registrant Letter. This letter will inform families of:
 - Their responsibility to report their children's immunization information to the Health Unit and to your centre.
 - The webpage for the Health Unit's secure online tool where families can report immunization information and print a copy of their records is included in the letter. Many primary care providers are promoting their tool with families and therefore some may have already shared some or all their children's immunization information to the Health Unit.
 - Alternative methods to online reporting for submitting records to the Health Unit (i.e. mail and drop-off).
2. Obtain a copy of the child's record for your centre. You can choose whether you keep a paper copy or an electronic copy.
 - Centres are asked not to send immunization records for children in their care to the Health Unit for all the children in their care. Records should only be submitted by families.

Exemptions:

If any of your families choose to "exempt" their children from vaccines, it is important that both the centre and the Health Unit have the required paperwork on file. Children can be exempt from legislated immunizations for two reasons: Philosophical (conscience/religious beliefs) or Medical.

Philosophical (conscience/religious beliefs) exemptions are the most common and are used when guardians want to exempt their child from some or all vaccines that are mandated under the Ontario schedule.

1. Ensure the guardian has the correct "Statement of Conscience or Religious Beliefs" form.
 - For children in child care, the form must read "Child and Early Years Act", not the "Immunization of School Pupil's Act", which is the form used for school-aged children. The forms are not interchangeable, as the legislation is separate, and the required vaccines are different. Once the child is attending school, a separate form for school-aged children must be signed and notarized and guardians must also complete a mandatory Immunization Education Session. This is required even if families have previously completed an exemption for child care.
 - This form must be notarized by a lawyer, notary, or other professional that has the legal right to notarize forms. The name should be included on a stamp to show who signed it, with their designation.

Medical exemptions for mandatory vaccines are not common but are used if a Health Care Provider determines it is not safe or required for a child to receive a vaccine, due to medical reasons.

1. Ensure the guardian has the correct "Statement of Medical Exemption" form.
 - For children in child care this form must read "Child Care and Early Years Act". It must state exactly which vaccines are exempt, and for how long, and must be signed by a physician or nurse practitioner. A note from a healthcare provider is not a sufficient replacement for a completed "Statement of Medical Exemption form."

Parents must submit the original copy of the exemption form to your centre a copy to the Health Unit. All exemption forms must be filed with your records at your centre. Guardians are unable to submit exemption forms to the Health Unit through the online reporting tool. Child care centres can assist families by faxing exemption forms to the Health Unit at (519) 663-0416. Please ensure the name of your centre, the child's name and birthday are written clearly.

Yearly Reviews:

1. The Health Unit requires a list of all children currently attending your centre along with the demographic information outlined in the background section of this document. This information must be entered in the Microsoft Excel spreadsheet template provided by the Health Unit. For the Health Unit to upload the information into the provincial immunization database, the values entered into the spreadsheet must follow the strict formatting rules that will be outlined to your centre.
2. Once completed, your centre will return the spreadsheet via secure email to the Health Unit.
3. Health Unit nurses will assess the immunization record we have on file for each child enrolled at your centre.
4. Letters are generated by Health Unit nurses for each child with missing immunization information. Your centre will receive a list that includes the names of the children who are missing mandatory vaccines as well as a letter to give their families. The Health Unit will arrange for the list and the letters to be delivered to your centre.
5. Your centre is responsible for distributing the letters that the Health Unit has generated for the families of the children who are missing mandatory vaccines. The letter explains that families are required to provide an updated immunization record to both the Health Unit and your centre and states which vaccines are missing. It is recommended that centres distribute the letters immediately as the spacing between vaccines at a young age is minimal and the information will quickly become outdated.
6. Operators can use the list of children who are missing mandatory vaccines to monitor the families who provide them with an updated record.

What Happens when a Reportable Disease Outbreak Happens in your Centre:

The Middlesex-London Health Unit is notified when any reportable disease is diagnosed in the community. If a child who attends a child care centre is involved, action must be taken quickly to decrease the chance of spread and protect everyone that they come into contact with. If the disease is vaccine-preventable, the immunization database is utilized to run a report to assess which children attending your centre may be at risk.

Those children who are not up to date with that particular vaccine, and those with exemptions, may have to be excluded from care until the risk is over. To accurately run this report, information should be up to date whenever possible. Your assistance may be required to give a current registrant list, along with any vaccine updates that the Health Unit doesn't already have. This is one reason why it is very important to keep vaccine records as current as possible and remind families to submit updated immunization information to the Health Unit.

How to Keep Records Current the Rest of the Year:

Your centre is encouraged to use various methods of communication with families to remind them to submit update immunization information to your centre and the Health Unit on an ongoing basis. Posters, postcards, and electronic resources are available by request from the Health Unit to assist with this.

Children following the routine immunization schedule should have received all of the primary immunizations they require for child care by the time they reach 19 months old. These children won't require another vaccine until they are school age!

The last page of this booklet provides operators with an overview of the Ontario Immunization Schedule, including information on the number of doses required, the minimum ages and spacing.

Operators with immunization related questions are welcome to contact the Health Unit's Vaccine Preventable Disease Team at (519) 663-5317.

Ontario Immunization Schedule Information:

Vaccine	Schedule	Other Information
“Pediace1”: Tetanus, Diphtheria, Polio, Pertussis, Hib	2 months 4 months 6 months 18 months	-first dose cannot be given before 6 weeks of age -first three doses must be a minimum of 4 weeks apart -the third and fourth dose must be a minimum of 6 months apart -children who received vaccines in other provinces or countries may have received these antigens as separate vaccines. Each of these antigens, however, are mandatory
“Prevnar13”: pneumococcal 13	2 months 4 months 1 year	-first dose cannot be given prior to 6 weeks of age -first two doses must be a minimum of 8 weeks apart -the third dose must be on or after the first birthday, and at least 8 weeks after the second dose -if Prevnar is started at a later age, fewer doses are required (call the Health Unit for information)
“Neis Vac-C” or “Menjugate”: Meningococcal-C	1 year	-this vaccine must be given on or after the first birthday -if any type of meningococcal vaccines were given at a younger age, a dose is still required on or after the first birthday and must be spaced a minimum of 4 weeks from any previous doses -if the vaccine was given in another country, call the Health Unit if you are unsure whether it meets requirements
“MMRII” or “Priorix”: Measles, Mumps, Rubella (MMR)*	1 year	-this vaccine must be given on or after the first birthday -this vaccine can be given on the same day as varicella -see * below, or call the Health Unit for more information
“Varivax” or “Varilrix”: Varicella (chickenpox)*	15 months	-this vaccine is routinely given at 15 months and must not be administered before the first birthday -this vaccine can be given on the same day as MMR -see * below, or call the Health Unit for more information
*Live vaccines must be given on the same day, or separated by either 4 weeks or 6 weeks depending on the order of vaccine. If live vaccines are given too close together, the vaccine that was given 2 nd must be repeated.		

References

Child Care and Early Years Act, SO 2014, C. 11, Sched. 1. <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/14c11>

Government of Ontario. (2018). *Immunization for children in schools and licensed child care settings protocol, 2018*. https://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/oph_standards/docs/protocols_guidelines/Immunization_Schools_Child_Care_Protocol_2018_en.pdf

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