



## Vaccines for Children Provider Notice

Pennsylvania Department of Health,  
Bureau of Communicable Diseases, Division of Immunizations

**July 2020**

### **COVID-19: Updates for VFC Providers**

Providers can access updates on COVID-19 by clicking the following link:

<https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/programs/immunizations/Pages/VFC.aspx>

In addition, please review this important information that impacts our providers:

- [Suspension of Immunization Site Visits During COVID-19 – Outbreak Guidance to Providers](#)
- [Temporary Provider Office Closures Due to COVID-19 Outbreak - Requirements for VFC and 317 Vaccines Storage and Handling](#)
- [Maintaining Childhood Immunizations During COVID-19 Pandemic](#)

Providers are also reminded of the following:

- Field staff will be resuming visits after protocol has been developed regarding PPE and other measures needed to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission. Our nurses will be calling to reschedule visits that were canceled and reaching out to other locations due for a visit.
- New enrollments may be delayed based upon availability of staff due to COVID-19 priorities.  
**Education Requirement:** The annual VFC education deadline was extended to **June 30<sup>th</sup>**, due to the impact of COVID-19. All VFC Coordinators and Back-ups should have completed the required 2020 training. If training has not been completed, your ordering privileges will be suspended until the required training certificates are received by the Program. Training certificates can be sent to the VFC Central Office via fax to 717-214-7223 or email to [Pimmunizations@pa.gov](mailto:Pimmunizations@pa.gov).

### **CDC: Schedule Changes and Guidance during the COVID-19 pandemic**

The COVID-19 pandemic situation is changing rapidly and requires different strategies to maintain clinical preventive services, including immunization. Please visit the following CDC page to review guidance for scheduling changes during this challenging time: <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/schedules/hcp/schedule-changes.html>.

Providers involved with perinatal hepatitis B immunizations may find the section “**Interim guidance to prevent mother-to-child transmission of hepatitis B virus**” of special interest.

### **Dr. Rachel Levine: The Importance of School Immunizations**

During a recent pandemic update, DOH Secretary Dr. Rachel Levine stressed the importance of maintaining all required childhood immunizations. “Since the beginning of this global pandemic it has been difficult for parents to

get their children to the pediatrician for well child visits and immunizations. It is very important for parents to continue with these checkups because of the important vaccines children receive at these visits, especially those required for children to return to school in the fall.

Unlike COVID-19, infectious diseases like measles, mumps, whooping cough, chickenpox, polio already have reliable, effective and safe vaccines. Vaccines are a great way to protect yourself and protect your family from a number of serious life-threatening diseases. Vaccinations not only protect children, they protect our entire community, especially those with compromised immune systems who cannot get vaccinated.”

For more information, please refer to this CDC article: [Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Routine Pediatric Vaccine Ordering and Administration](#).

### **Updated Requirements for Childhood Immunizations**

Given the COVID-19 pandemic, there are risks and difficulties attendant on requiring immunization of children to enter and attend school. Preventive medical visits, including those associated with the administration of vaccines, have been postponed to mitigate the risk of transmission of the COVID-19 virus. Therefore, many children in Pennsylvania have not obtained vaccinations on the appropriate schedule and may not have the immunizations required to enter and attend school in the fall of 2020.

To enable children to enter and attend school or an early childhood program without the required immunizations, with Governor Wolf's authorization as conferred in the March 6, 2020 Proclamation of Disaster Emergency, the Department is temporarily suspending the regulations at 28 Pa. Code § 23.83, which provides the list of immunizations a child must have and the grades for which the child must have them; 28 Pa. Code § 23.85, which states that children who do not meet the requirements should be excluded and places certain duties on schools to verify that children with medical exceptions who are on a plan to get their immunizations actually obtain the vaccinations; and 28 Pa. Code § 23.86, which requires schools to report to the Department the numbers of vaccinations and children taking exceptions; and 28 Pa. Code § 27.77(b), which requires that a child currently enrolled in a child care program maintain updated immunizations in accordance with federal guidelines. The regulations are suspended for a two-month period after the beginning of the school year or the beginning of enrollment in an early childhood education program.

For the complete July 21, 2020 press release, please visit:

<https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/coronavirus/Pages/Guidance/Temporary-Regulatory-Suspension-Immunizations.aspx>

### **Provider Information Update**

Due to COVID-19, our typical re-enrollment process is suspended. In its place, a Microsoft Form will be emailed to each provider site. This form is forthcoming and will be used to update your provider information and demographics. This information is required and the form should be completed as soon as it's received. Failure to complete the Provider Information Update may impact your ability to order vaccines.

In anticipation, please ensure that all digital data logger (DDL) certificates are current and vaccine coordinators and back-ups have completed You Call the Shots Modules 10 and 16. Training certificates must be sent to the Program to receive credit for taking the course and were required by June 30, 2020.

### **Storage and Handling Reminder**

Remember that the ambient temperature(s) of the room(s) where your vaccine cold storage units are kept can contribute to temperature excursions. Please ensure that adequate heat and air conditioning is available to assist with temperature maintenance of all vaccine cold storage units and adjust accordingly.

### **Distribution of Vaccine Information Statements**

Please follow the below guidance from CDC when providing Vaccine Information Statements (VIS) to patients.

#### **Ways to give a VIS:**

- Paper copies of the VIS can be printed and given to patients prior to vaccination.
- Permanent, laminated office copies may be given to patients to read prior to vaccination.
- Patients may view VIS on a computer monitor or other video display.
- Patients may read the VIS on their phone or other digital device by downloading the pdf file from CDC's website.
- Patients may be given a copy of a VIS during a prior visit, emailed, or told how to access it through the internet, so they can read it in advance. These patients must still be offered a copy to read during the immunization visit, as a reminder.

For more information, the full article is available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/vis/about/facts-vis.html#give>

**Please add the Vaccines For Children email to your address book: [RA-pavfc@pa.gov](mailto:RA-pavfc@pa.gov)**