



Department of Public Health and Human Services

Public Health & Safety Division ♦ Communicable Disease Control & Prevention Bureau

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Steve Bullock, Governor

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To: Public Health and School Immunization Partners
From: Department of Public Health & Human Services, Immunization Program
Date: May 27, 2015
Subject: Changes in School Immunization Requirements effective **October 1, 2015**

The 2015 Montana Legislature revised school immunization requirements for school attendance through the passage of House Bill (HB) 158. The law, signed by the Governor and effective October 1, 2015, requires students attending school be vaccinated against varicella disease (chickenpox) and receive a booster of pertussis vaccine at 7th grade.

We anticipate modeling requirements based upon the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practice (ACIP) recommendations. The information below provides a brief overview of current recommendations and may be useful to answer questions regarding what to expect in the new requirements.

Varicella (Chickenpox) Vaccine

Students in kindergarten through 12th grade will need to have two doses of varicella vaccine.

In lieu of receiving the varicella vaccine, we anticipate the rule will allow evidence of immunity to varicella virus. Options will include:

- Laboratory evidence of immunity or laboratory confirmation of disease,
- Diagnosis or verification of a history of varicella disease by a health-care provider (MD, DO, NP, PA)
- Diagnosis or verification of a history of herpes zoster by a health-care provider (MD, DO, NP or PA)

Tdap Vaccine

Tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis will be required for students prior to attending 7th grade. Students currently in grades 8th-12th who have not yet received their Tdap will require a single dose.

Since the duration of immunity as a result of pertussis is not clearly established, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the ACIP do not encourage the use of history of illness as an exemption for pertussis vaccination. Montana's rules will be consistent with this recommendation.

Exemptions and Conditional Attendance

No changes in exemptions or conditional attendance procedures were made in the law. As long as students have received at least one vaccine in the required series, a student may qualify for a conditional attendance as allowed by current regulations. Additionally, medical and religious exemptions are still allowed with appropriate documentation.

Recommendations to Prepare for Implementation

The Montana Immunization Program, along with local health jurisdictions, will be in contact throughout the summer and fall to assist schools, health-care providers and parents come into compliance with the new requirements. We encourage vaccination and updating of vaccine records before the start of the school year to make implementation as smooth as possible.

DPHHS would like to express our thanks to all those who supported this important public health measure. Should you have any questions about the upcoming changes or suggestions on implementation, please contact the Montana Immunization Program directly at (406) 444-5580 or at HHSIZ@mt.gov .