

# Information Sheet

**Date:** May 27, 2015

**Subject:** Changes in School Immunization Requirements effective **October 1, 2015**

**Background:** 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 7<sup>th</sup> grade.

**Information:** New requirements will be based upon the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practice (ACIP) recommendations. The information below provides a brief overview of current recommendations:

## 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 (Tdap) 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:** Local health jurisdictions should share this advisory with their local school contacts. School contacts should anticipate further communication from state and local public health during the summer to assist with the transition.