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**To:** Pediatric Providers  
School Health Personnel

**From:** Pejman Talebian, MA, MPH  
Director, MDPH Immunization Program

Mary Ann Gapinski, MSN, RN, NCSN  
Director, MDPH School Health Unit

**Re:** Clarification of Immunization Requirements for Children in K0, K1 and K2  
Classes

**Date:** August 2015

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As required by state regulations (105 CMR 220.000), the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) has established immunization requirements for entry into kindergarten. Specifically, the following vaccines are required, unless there is a medical exemption signed by a physician, or a religious exemption signed by the parent/guardian.

**Vaccines Required for Kindergarten (K2):**

**DTaP**

- Regardless of age, 5 doses of DTaP are required unless the 4<sup>th</sup> dose is given after the 4<sup>th</sup> birthday.

**Polio**

- 4 doses are required, unless the third dose is given on or after the 4<sup>th</sup> birthday, in which case only 3 doses are needed. Administer the final dose in the series on or after the 4th birthday. If 4 doses are administered prior to age 4 years, a 5th dose is recommended at age 4 through 6 years.

**MMR**

- 2 doses of MMR, given  $\geq$  1 month apart, are required. Only doses given on or after the 1<sup>st</sup> birthday are considered valid.

## **Hepatitis B**

- Three doses of hepatitis B vaccine are required.

## **Varicella**

- 2 doses of varicella vaccine, given  $\geq 1$  month apart, are required. A reliable history of chickenpox is also acceptable (see below). Only doses given on or after the 1<sup>st</sup> birthday are considered valid.
- A reliable history of chicken pox is defined as 1) physician interpretation of parent/guardian description of chickenpox; 2) physician diagnosis of chickenpox; or 3) serologic proof of immunity.

## **Vaccines Required for Preschool Programs (including K0 and K1):**

### **DTaP**

- 4 doses are sufficient. The 5<sup>th</sup> dose must be given by the time the child enters K2, provided the child is at least 4 years of age and  $\geq 6$  months have elapsed since the 4<sup>th</sup> dose. If less time has elapsed, they can be given a temporary medical exemption and receive their last dose as soon as they are eligible.

### **Polio**

- 3 doses of polio vaccine are sufficient. The 4<sup>th</sup> dose must be given by the time the child enters K2, provided the child is at least 4 years of age and  $\geq 6$  months have elapsed since the 3<sup>rd</sup> dose. If less time has elapsed, they can be given a temporary medical exemption and receive their last dose as soon as they are eligible.

### **MMR**

- One dose of MMR is sufficient. Two doses are also acceptable. The 2<sup>nd</sup> dose must be given before the child enters K2, provided  $\geq 1$  month has elapsed since the 1<sup>st</sup> dose. If less time has elapsed, they can be given a temporary medical exemption and receive their 2<sup>nd</sup> dose as soon as they are eligible.

## **Hepatitis B**

- Three doses of hepatitis B vaccine are required.

## **Varicella**

- One dose of varicella vaccine is sufficient. Two doses are also acceptable. A reliable history of chickenpox is also acceptable (see below). The 2<sup>nd</sup> dose must be given before the child enters K2, provided  $\geq 1$  month has elapsed since the 1<sup>st</sup> dose. If less time has elapsed, they can be given a medical exemption and receive their 2<sup>nd</sup> dose as soon as they are eligible.
- A reliable history of chicken pox is defined as 1) physician interpretation of parent/guardian description of chickenpox; 2) physician diagnosis of chickenpox; or 3) serologic proof of immunity.

When a child moves from a K0, K1, or preschool program to K2, school health programs should have in place a protocol for reassessing immunization status for DTaP, Polio, MMR and varicella requirements. They should also have a system for tracking students

with temporary medical exemptions to ensure they receive their final doses in the series for these vaccines.

Children who do not meet the minimum immunization requirements for school entry will be excluded from school until they are brought up to date with their immunizations. It is important that health care providers provide parents with their children's immunization records, as they will need them for school and day care entry. It is also important that health care providers respond to inquiries by school nurses to insure that children meet the requirements for school entry.

Massachusetts has high rates of immunization coverage, and very low incidence of vaccine-preventable diseases among pre-school and school age children. School immunization regulations, and their enforcement, play an important role in this success.

Please feel free to call the Massachusetts Department of Public Health Immunization Program at (617) 983-6800 if you need further clarification or assistance.