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To: Early Education and Care Program Directors
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From: Amy Kershaw, Commissioner
Department of Early Education and Care
Jeffrey C. Riley, Commissioner
Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
Pejman Talebian, MA, MPH, Director
Immunization Division, Department of Public Health

Re: 2023-2024 Child Care/Preschool Immunization Survey

Date: September 2023

The annual public and private **Child Care/Preschool Immunization Survey** is conducted by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) Immunization Division. The purpose of this survey is to identify children entering Child Care/Preschool who are not protected against vaccine-preventable diseases and to ensure that they are properly immunized according to state requirements. These data are publicly available on the Immunization Division website.

Regulations established by the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) and the Department of Public Health require that:

- 1) Licensees must maintain immunization records for all children enrolled in their program.
- 2) All children must be age-appropriately immunized to attend unless they have a medical or religious exemption.

These regulations are designed to prevent illness and disruptions caused by diseases. The Department of Public Health supports a "no shots-no entry" policy for children attending early education and care programs or preschools.

School Immunization Requirements

Immunization requirements for entry to early education and care programs or preschool for children 2 years and older:

- 4 or more doses of DTaP
- 3 or more doses of polio

- 1 dose of MMR
- 1 to 4 doses of Hib (depending on the age when doses are received)
- 3 doses of hepatitis B
- 1 dose of varicella (chickenpox) vaccine or physician-certified history of chickenpox disease

Recommended Vaccines

- 1 dose of influenza vaccine for the current influenza season
- 1 dose of updated COVID-19 vaccine
- 4 doses of PCV (PCV13 or PCV15)
- 2 doses of hepatitis A
- 2 to 3 doses of rotavirus (depending on vaccine formulation)

Please see the MDPH document *Massachusetts School Immunization Requirements 2023-2024* for additional details:

(<https://www.mass.gov/doc/immunization-requirements-for-school-entry-0/download>).

Every Student Succeeds Act

Please note that unimmunized or partially immunized homeless children and children in foster care attending a public-school preschool program cannot be denied entry to public schools if they do not have immunization records. The federal **Every Student Succeeds Act** states that if a child or youth who is homeless or in foster care arrives lacking immunizations or medical records, the parent/guardian should be referred to the district's Homeless Education Liaison/foster care point of contact, who has the responsibility to obtain relevant academic records and immunizations or medical records and to ensure that students who are homeless or in foster care are attending school while the records are obtained. The student must be enrolled and permitted to attend public school in the interim. Additionally, EEC-licensed programs are allowed a 6 month grace period from the time of enrollment to obtain immunization records for any children who are homeless or in foster care at the time of entering care. If you have any questions about the Every Student Succeeds Act, please contact the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) at (781) 338-3700 or compliance@doe.mass.edu.

Before- and after-school programs are not expected to complete the immunization survey if immunization records are on file at each child's school. If your program falls into this category, please disregard the survey invitation and contact the MDPH Immunization Data Assessment Unit at immassessmentunit@mass.gov to remove your program from our contact list. Although you do not need to complete the survey, you are still responsible for ensuring the immunization records are on file at each child's school.

Survey Deadline

The standard child care immunization survey is due by January 26, 2024. In previous years, influenza vaccination information was collected in a second section – the “**flu survey**” – of the standard immunization survey. *This section has been discontinued and influenza data will not be collected this year.*

Adult Staff Guidelines

Following EEC regulations, **all early education and care staff must provide proof of immunity to measles, mumps, and rubella.** Questions regarding staff immunity to measles, mumps, and rubella are included in the annual immunization survey. Information and instructions about how to collect and report this information are available on the MDPH website. Go to <https://www.mass.gov/lists/school-immunization-surveys>, then scroll down to Child Care Staff Instructions and Worksheet.

Immunization Survey Results

In 2022-2023, the immunization records of 78,672 child care/preschool children from 3,203 licensed programs were reviewed. Immunization rates by program for programs reporting 30 or more children are available on the Immunization Division website: (<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/school-immunizations>).

Results from Immunization Survey of Children ≥ 2 Years of Age Enrolled in Licensed Group Child Care /Preschool

School Year	No. of Records Reviewed	≥ 4 DTaP	≥ 3 Polio	1 MMR	≥ 3 Hib	3 Hep B	Immunity to Chickenpox*	≥ 4 DTaP and ≥ 3 Polio and 1 MMR	Medical Exemptions	Religious Exemptions
2022-23	78,672	96.6%	97.1%	97.7%	96.8%	96.6%	97.3%	94.5%	0.15%	0.88%
2021-22	80,329	96.2%	97.4%	95.9%	96.0%	96.8%	96.8%	93.4%	0.17%	0.77%
2020-21	54,941	97.3%	97.5%	98.3%	97.2%	97.0%	97.9%	94.9%	0.27%	0.97%

*Immunity to chickenpox disease includes children who have a documented physician-certified reliable history of chickenpox disease, or 1 dose of varicella vaccine.

While the rate of religious exemptions has remained relatively steady in recent years, we encourage schools and programs to review their policies and practices regarding exemptions, including the recommendation to have families renew these annually. The resources below are available to help with communication with parents lacking vaccine confidence:

- *Personal belief exemptions for vaccination put people at risk. Examine the evidence for yourself* <http://www.immunize.org/catg.d/p2069.pdf>
- *What if you don't immunize your child?* <http://www.immunize.org/catg.d/p4017.pdf>
- *Childhood vaccine information for parents and caregivers – a page of resources* <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/childhood-vaccine-information-for-parents-and-caregivers>

Massachusetts school immunization requirements have been very effective in preventing the outbreak of vaccine-preventable diseases. Continued enforcement of the immunization requirements is essential to the health of our children.

Your efforts in completing this survey contribute to protecting our children from vaccine-preventable diseases. Please use the survey worksheets and instructions to help complete the survey accurately. **Please retain copies of the survey and worksheets to facilitate follow-up on children and staff not fully immunized.** You may be chosen for a randomized audit of immunization records or be called to review your records by MDPH Immunization Division staff. If you have any questions, please contact the MDPH Data Assessment Unit by email at immassessmentunit@mass.gov.