

## **Reminder: Pharmaceutical Grade or Purpose-Built Refrigerators are Required for All Vaccine Storage Units (Primary and Secondary)**

The *Guidelines for Compliance with Federal and State Vaccine Administration Requirements* state that the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) requires all enrolled practices to have pharmaceutical grade or purpose-built refrigerators for all refrigerated vaccine storage units in their facility.

Stand-alone freezers that are not pharmaceutical grade will be acceptable as long as they maintain the proper storage temperature.

Although there is no specific description of a pharmaceutical grade refrigerator, some of the characteristics include:

- Internal overhead fans to disperse air throughout the unit, eliminating pockets of cold air
- Adjustable wire shelves to allow better air flow
- Electronic digital thermostat
- Micro processor
- No storage bins or shelves on door
- Typically, pharmaceutical grade refrigerators have a narrow operating range (varying by less than 2°C)

Listed below are a sample of manufacturers and distributors that you may wish to consider for safe vaccine storage in your practice. Please note that MDPH cannot endorse or recommend specific products or brands.

Aegis	<a href="http://www.aegisfridge.com">http://www.aegisfridge.com</a>
American Biotech Supply	<a href="http://www.americanbiotechsupply.com">www.americanbiotechsupply.com</a>
Fisher Scientific (Isotemp)	<a href="http://www.fishersci.com">www.fishersci.com</a>
Helmer	<a href="http://www.helmerinc.com">www.helmerinc.com</a>
Migali Scientific Refrigeration	<a href="http://www.migaliscientific.com">www.migaliscientific.com</a>
Tempure	<a href="http://www.tempurescientific.com">www.tempurescientific.com</a>

MDPH has determined that most standard domestic combination refrigerator/freezer units are inappropriate for vaccine storage. In addition, many stand-alone refrigerators that are not pharmacy grade lack the necessary features for the safe storage of vaccines. As a result, MDPH is requiring the use of pharmaceutical grade or purpose-built refrigerators to store **all** refrigerated state-supplied vaccines. Providers identified to be storing any vaccine in non-pharmaceutical grade or purpose-built refrigerators will receive follow-up contacts to ensure that all storage units are in compliance. In addition, as part of the MDPH Restitution Policy, providers may be held financially responsible for vaccine loss due to negligence. This could be significantly more than the cost of a pharmaceutical grade or purpose-built refrigerator.

**Massachusetts Department of Public Health  
Immunization Division | Vaccine for Children (VFC) Program**

305 South Street, Jamaica Plain, MA 02130  
P: 617-983-6828 | F: 857-323-8320 | Email: [dph-vaccine-management@mass.gov](mailto:dph-vaccine-management@mass.gov)

**Vaccine Storage Unit Checklist**

**Complete and return** one checklist for every storage unit that will be holding State Vaccines.

**Storage Unit:**

State-supplied refrigerated vaccines must be stored in a Pharmaceutical Grade or Purpose-Built Refrigerator storage unit (Primary and Secondary Units). State-supplied frozen vaccines must be stored in a standalone freezer.

☐ Refrigerator

(Pharmaceutical)

☐ Refrigerator

(Purpose-Built)

☐ Freezer

☐ Ultra-Cold Freezer

Site PIN #:

Brand:

Model #:

**Refrigerator**

☐ Internal fans to disperse air throughout the unit

☐ Adjustable wire shelves to allow air flow

☐ Electronic digital thermostat

☐ Microprocessor\*\*

☐ No storage bins or shelves on door

☐ Refrigerator has a narrow operating range (varying by less than 2° C)\*\*

**Freezer**

☐ Standalone unit, cannot be mix of fridge and freezer (if it is a combination unit, the fridge and freezer must have individual plug-ins for wall outlets)

☐ Must be able to store vaccines below -15° C (5° F)

**Ultra-Cold Freezer**

☐ Must be able to maintain temperatures between -90° C and -60° C (-130° F and -76° F)

☐ Sites must privately purchase a DDL to monitor temperatures in Ultra-Cold storage units as they will not be provided by the State.

*\*DDLs for Ultra-Cold Temperatures using a buffered temperature probe provide the most accurate measurement of vaccine temperatures. For accurate ultra-cold temperature monitoring, it is essential to use an air-probe, or a probe designed specifically for ultra-cold temperatures with the DDL.*

**\*\*To determine if a storage unit has a microprocessor and is within the operating range, please search the model number online and review the manufacturer website for unit specifications.**

**Storage Unit Electrical Plug:**

**DO NOT plug storage units into a power strip, surge protector, extension cord, battery pack or a ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) outlet.**

☐ The storage unit is plugged directly into a wall outlet.

**Recommendation:**

It is recommended that storage units are serviced by a technician every two years at minimum to ensure proper functioning and troubleshooting of potential issues.

**Completed by:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_