



STATE OF TENNESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
IMMUNIZATION PROGRAM
CORDELL HULL BUILDING, 1ST FLOOR
425 - 5TH AVENUE NORTH
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE 37243

March 1, 2010

Dear Healthcare Provider,

The Tennessee Department of Health (TDH) has adopted new immunization requirements for child care (including pre-school and pre-Kindergarten) and school entry, effective July 1, and is introducing a new Tennessee Certificate of Immunization. These rules are online at <http://www.state.tn.us/sos/rules/1200/1200-14/1200-14.htm> (click on 1200-14-1, then go to rule 1200-14-1-.29). This is the first update of state immunization rules in a decade. All vaccines required are already routinely recommended for children by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP).

Cost should be no burden to families needing to meet these requirements. Children whose families have difficulty affording vaccination in private offices may be referred to any local health department where vaccines are provided at no charge, except for a small administration fee that slides based on income.

When signing an immunization certificate, a healthcare provider is affirming that the child meets requirements as indicated. Schools are not expected to recheck the provider's assessment; parents may be sent back to their healthcare provider if certificates are not correctly completed by the provider. Therefore, it is essential that each healthcare provider who issues a TDH Certificate of Immunization understands these new rules.

Under the new rules, providers authorized to issue a certificate include those licensed in the state of Tennessee by the Board of Medical Examiners (including Physician Assistants) and the Board of Osteopathic Examiners, advanced practice nurses licensed by the Board of Nursing and any Tennessee health department.

We are committed to helping you overcome the challenges inherent in this change. This detailed letter provides basic information about the new certificate and the new requirements. Distributed with this letter are the following documents:

- Sample version of the new certificate (*not* valid for official use)
- Explanatory notes for completion of new certificate
- Summary of new requirements and acceptable exemptions

Please note that beginning in *July 2011*, new full time enrollees in Tennessee colleges born after 1979 will need to provide the institutions with proof of varicella immunity (history of disease or *two* doses of varicella vaccine), in addition to the requirement for two doses of MMR. Each institution will use its own health forms for documentation, no state certificate is used.

Use of New Official Immunization Certificate

The new Certificate of Immunization will become available to healthcare providers in hard copy and online by *April 1, 2010*. This single certificate requires the provider to indicate the category of completion (pre-school, Kindergarten, 7th grade) and replaces the separate school and pre-school certificates (the "green" and "yellow" forms): it will have no special color. Since 1986, Tennessee state law has required facilities to accept only the TDH Official Certificate of Immunization. Information must be *on* the certificate, not attached to it.

There are two options for healthcare providers to complete the new Official Certificate. We recommend using the internet-based Tennessee Web Immunization System (TWIS). TWIS is available free of charge to authorized healthcare providers and staff: visit the website (<https://twis.tn.gov>) to initiate registration. All immunization records entered in TWIS are stored permanently and accessible to all TWIS users. Each TWIS certificate is printed with the patient's demographic and immunization information, as well as provider information, minimizing writing for office staff. Providers who do not use TWIS may obtain hard copies to complete manually from the TDH Immunization Program or from local health departments after April 1.

Children entering pre-Kindergarten, Kindergarten, 7th grade, other new enrollees:

The Department of Education has advised schools that children beginning pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten after July 1 will need the new certificate prior to attending (public schools will permit a one-time grace period for parents until October 1 because of the certificate change). Children do **not** need to have the old version of the certificate completed in order to pre-register for fall classes this spring; school and health department officials recommend that they go ahead and register, then bring the new certificate before classes start.

New rules apply to all children entering 7th grade (or equivalent). These children must have documentation of a dose of tetanus-diphtheria-pertussis (Tdap) vaccine and verification of varicella immunity through disease or *two* doses of varicella vaccine. Verification of hepatitis B vaccination of currently enrolled 7th graders is no longer required. It is not necessary to transfer the other immunizations already recorded on their existing Tennessee certificate; the schools can simply append the new certificate to the earlier certificate.

Older children enrolling for the first time in a Tennessee school this fall must use the new certificate, just like new Kindergarten students. Verification of hepatitis B and varicella immunity are now among the requirements for children enrolling for the first time in a Tennessee school at any grade level. Children transferring from one school to another within Tennessee should transfer their existing Tennessee certificate to the new school, as usual, and do **not** need a new certificate, unless enrolling in 7th grade, as specified above. Out-of-state records may be transferred onto a certificate by a healthcare provider or local health department.

Children entering child care (pre-school):

The new child care rules go into effect on July 1, with the exception of the immediate resumption of the Hib vaccine requirement that was temporarily suspended after a nationwide shortage began in 2008. Children who begin attending child care facilities before July 1 must meet the current requirements in effect until July 1, but they may use either a "Yellow" or new certificate for documentation until July 1. Infants entering child care facilities must be up to date at the time of enrollment and will be required to provide an updated certificate after completing all of the required vaccines due by 18 months of age.

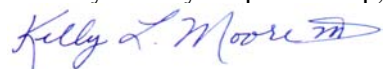
Children who do not have all required immunizations but need to enroll

The healthcare provider must issue a temporary certificate and write in the expiration date on the line provided: the expiration date is one calendar month after the next catch-up dose of required vaccine is due. Children may remain in school while catching up by providing schools with valid temporary certificates.

Questions

Information about the vaccine requirements is available online at <http://health.state.tn.us/CEDS/required.htm> or you may contact the TDH Immunization Program at 1-800-404-3006 (or 615-741-7247). For general information on vaccines, visit www.cdc.gov/vaccines. For questions about school policies or health examinations, contact your local school system or Coordinated School Health at the Tennessee Department of Education (<http://www.state.tn.us/education/schoolhealth/> or 615-532-6300). The TWIS helpdesk is available by email or phone (go to <https://twis.tn.gov>).

Thank you for your partnership,



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