

Janet T. Mills
Governor

Jeanne M. Lambrew, Ph.D.
Commissioner



Maine Department of Health and Human Services
Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention
11 State House Station
286 Water Street
Augusta, Maine 04333-0011
Tel; (207) 287-8016; Fax (207) 287-9058
TTY: Dial 711 (Maine Relay)

Preparing Students for 2021-2022 School Year

August 4, 2021

Effective September 1, 2021, Maine's new immunization law removes both philosophical and religious exemptions to school-aged children's immunization requirements. No child will be permitted to attend school without evidence of immunization or proof of immunity against disease, unless one of more of the following circumstances apply:

1. Written Assurance from Parent of Private Effort to Immunize Child: The parent provides the school with a written assurance that the child will be immunized by private effort within 90 days of enrollment (officially registering) in school or of the child first attending, whichever date is the earliest, in accordance with [20-A MRS § 6355\(1\)](#).

The granting of this 90-day period is a one-time provision. If, after 90 days have passed, the parent fails to provide the required evidence of immunization or immunity against each of the diseases listed in this rule, then the superintendent must exclude the student from school and may permit the student's return upon receipt of evidence of the required immunizations, immunity or exemption under law.

2. Written Consent to Immunize Child: The parent grants written consent for the child's immunization by a public health officer, physician, nurse or other authorized person in their employ, or acting as an agent of the school, where such immunization programs are in effect.
3. Medical exemption in accordance with [20-A MRS § 6355\(2\)](#).
4. Individualized Education Plan: In accordance with [20-A MRS § 6355\(4\)](#), a student covered by an individualized education plan on September 1, 2021 who elected a philosophical or religious exemption from immunization requirements on or before September 1, 2021 pursuant to the law in effect prior to that date, may continue to attend school under that student's existing exemption as long as:
 - a. The parent or guardian of the student provides a statement from a licensed physician, nurse practitioner or physician assistant that the physician, nurse practitioner or physician assistant has consulted with that parent or guardian and has made that parent or guardian aware of the risks and benefits associated with the choice to immunize; or
 - b. If the student is 18 years of age or older, the student provides a statement from a licensed physician, nurse practitioner or physician assistant that the physician, nurse practitioner or

physician assistant has consulted with that student and has made that student aware of the risks and benefits associated with the choice to immunize.

- c. If a student has an immunization exemption in accordance with this section, the student will be able to maintain that exemption after dismissal from special education services and will be considered exempt until the child is no longer eligible for free, appropriate public education (FAPE).

5. The student may be enrolled in a distance education program offered by a school, if the student does not physically attend any classes or programs at the school or a school facility

On July 7, the comment period for the Proposed Rule Immunization Requirements for School Children ([ch. 261/126](#)) was posted with a deadline of August 5, 2021. A virtual [public hearing](#) took place on July 26. For more information, please see the [Notice of Rulemaking](#), which provides additional details regarding this rulemaking, including public hearing information.

We would like to remind health care providers about the new school immunization law as the 2021-2022 school year quickly approaches. If you have patients that are either non-immunized or incompletely immunized and may have either a philosophical or a religious exemption for immunizations, now is the time to work with parents to schedule well-child and vaccination appointments to ensure children are up-to-date on their immunizations and prepared for the upcoming school year.

Throughout the pandemic, we have encouraged parents to continue to bring their children in for well-child visits and about the importance of children receiving their recommended immunizations. As COVID-19 circulated throughout our state, we saw our immunization rates fall, particularly with adolescents, with many parents delaying visits and recommended immunizations due to fear of contracting COVID-19. We are now seeing the pandemic outlook improve but we have a lot of work to do to bring our immunization rates back up.

The State of Maine currently requires the following immunizations for all school children:

Required for Kindergarten entry:

- 5 DTaP (diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis; 4 DTaP if 4th is given on or after 4th birthday)
- 4 Polio (if 4th dose given before the 4th birthday, an additional age appropriate IPV should be given on or after the 4th birthday)
- 2 MMR (measles, mumps, rubella)
- 1 Varicella (chickenpox) or reliable history of disease

Required for 7th grade entry:

- Tdap (tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis)
- 1 Meningococcal Conjugate (MCV4)

Required for 12th grade entry:

- 2 MCV4, only one dose is required if the 1st dose is given on or after 16th birthday

As you vaccinate your patients with the required immunizations for the fall, we strongly encourage you to use this opportunity to include other routinely recommended vaccines. Although not required, but equally important, are the following immunizations:

- [COVID-19 \(for those 12 years and older\)](#)
- [HPV](#)
- [Meningococcal B](#)
- [Influenza](#)

Immunization Catch-Up Resources from the U.S. CDC:

- [Catch-Up Immunizations Schedule from the CDC](#)
- [Diphtheria-, Tetanus-, and Pertussis-Containing Vaccines Catch-Up Guidance for Children 4 Months through 6 Years of Age \(PDF\)](#)
- [Inactivated Polio Vaccine \(IPV\) \(PDF\)](#)
- [Tetanus-, Diphtheria-, and Pertussis-Containing Vaccines Catch-Up Guidance for Children 7 through 9 Years of Age \(PDF\)](#)
- [Tetanus-, Diphtheria-, and Pertussis-Containing Vaccines Catch-Up Guidance for Children 10 through 18 Years of Age \(PDF\)](#)

We thank you for your continued work throughout the pandemic and for helping to keep the children of Maine free from vaccine-preventable diseases.

If you have any questions regarding the immunization schedule or vaccines in general, please contact the Maine Immunization Program's Educator Line at 207-287-9972.