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Bulletin No. 21 December 26, 2000

<http://www.epi.hss.state.ak.us>

New School and Childcare Immunization Requirements for Fall, 2001

WHAT ARE THE IMMUNIZATION REQUIREMENTS?

The Alaska Departments of Education and Child Development and of Health and Social Services have revised the existing immunization regulations for students attending Alaska schools and childcare facilities. All children in Alaska schools and childcare facilities have been required to be immunized against certain diseases since the 1970s. The new regulations require immunization against additional diseases, as shown below.

Requirements ¹	Vaccine-Preventable Disease	Facility Type	
		School	Childcare Facility
Existing	Diphtheria	✓	✓
	Tetanus	✓	✓
	Pertussis	✓	✓
	Polio	✓	✓
	Measles	✓	✓
	Rubella	✓	✓
Additional (new for 2001)	Mumps ²	☆	☆
	Hepatitis A	☆	☆
	Hepatitis B	☆	☆
	Hib ³		☆
	Varicella ⁴		☆

¹ Exemptions may be granted for medical or religious reasons.

² Almost all Alaska children already have received mumps vaccine because it is a component of "MMR" (measles/mumps/rubella) vaccine.

³ Hib = *Haemophilus influenzae* type b

⁴ Varicella = "chickenpox"

WHO WILL BE AFFECTED?

All students in preschool and K-12th grade in both public and private schools and all children attending a licensed childcare facility must meet the new immunization requirements.

WHEN WILL THIS BE ENFORCED?

Enforcement of the new requirements for both schools and childcare facilities will begin at the start of a local school district's 2001-2002 year (in the fall of 2001).

WHY ARE THESE CHANGES BEING MADE?

Since the regulations were last revised in 1975, new vaccines have been developed to prevent additional diseases. The proposed new requirements reflect the current medical recommendations. As detailed in *Epidemiology Bulletin* No. 8, May 2, 2000, immunization against these diseases is important to provide all Alaska children with protection against the potentially devastating effects of these diseases. Hepatitis A, hepatitis B, and Hib disease have all caused deaths among Alaska children. Even varicella (chickenpox), which often is a relatively mild, self-limiting illness, has caused the death of an Alaska child as recently as 1997.

WILL ALL ALASKA CHILDREN NEED NEW IMMUNIZATIONS?

Maybe not. Many children in Alaska already have received some or all of these immunizations because they have been recommended for years. Even though varicella vaccine is a relative newcomer, many children already have had chickenpox and therefore varicella vaccine will not be needed. Only children who have never been vaccinated against chickenpox or never had the disease will need this shot. For diseases other than chickenpox, a child will need the required shots or must have laboratory-confirmed immunity against the specific disease.

WHAT IF A FAMILY CAN'T AFFORD THE REQUIRED VACCINES?

These and other childhood vaccines are provided to Alaska medical providers at no cost. Providers must agree they will not charge for the vaccine, although a nominal fee to cover administrative expenses is allowed. Providers wishing to register to participate in the state's vaccine distribution program should contact Suzanne Mattingley at 269-8000.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN ON THE FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL/CHILDCARE IN THE FALL OF 2001?

Any child who lacks proof of immunization or a valid exemption will be excluded from school or childcare. Children who have begun the required series and are in the "waiting period" before additional doses may be given will be allowed to remain in attendance until the next dose is due.

ARE ANY EXEMPTIONS TO THE IMMUNIZATION REQUIREMENTS ALLOWED?

Two types of exemptions to immunization requirements are allowed in Alaska.

Medical – The new regulations allow a statement signed by an Alaska licensed physician, osteopath, physician assistant, or advanced nurse practitioner stating that immunizations would, in that individual's professional opinion, be injurious to the health of the child or members of the child's family or household.

Religious – A parent or guardian must sign a statement affirming that immunization conflicts with the tenets and practices of the church or religious denomination of which the applicant is a member.

WHERE CAN ADDITIONAL INFORMATION BE OBTAINED?

AK Immunization Program 269-8000

AK Immunization Hotline:
(Toll-free) 1-888-430-4321
or in Anchorage 269-8088

AK Section of Epidemiology: www.epi.hss.state.ak.us

General Immunization Info: www.cdc.gov/nip