

**2020-21 School & Child Care Immunization Requirements
Questions and Answers
May 18, 2020**

Q1: Will immunization requirements for students attending licensed child care, elementary and secondary schools in 2020-21 be delayed or suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic?

A: At this time, the Iowa Department of Public Health does not plan to delay or suspend immunization requirements for the 2020-21 school year. In order to attend school or licensed child care for the 2020-21 school year, all students shall have received the required immunizations and submit an Iowa Department of Public Health Certificate of Immunization or have a valid Certificate of Immunization Exemption, or Provisional Certificate of Immunization.

Q2: Can Iowa licensed child cares and schools disallow medical and religious exemptions for the 2020-21 school year due to the COVID-19 pandemic?

A: The Iowa Code section 139A.8(4)(b) and Iowa Immunization Administrative Code 7.3(3) states “Medical and religious exemptions under this rule do not apply in times of emergency or epidemic as determined by the state board of health and declared by the director of public health.”

It is the Iowa Department of Public Health’s position that this code section is applicable only if the emergency or epidemic results from an outbreak of a vaccine-preventable disease and that Iowa Immunization Administrative Code 7.3(3) would therefore not apply to the COVID-19 pandemic. Hence school districts should continue, even during the COVID-19 pandemic, to recognize medical and religious exemptions if a student satisfies the requirements for the exemption.

Q3: What if a student has not received all of the required vaccines prior to the start of school?

A: Students that have received at least one dose of each of the required immunizations may attend school by submitting a Provisional Certificate of Immunization. A provisional certificate is valid for 60 days and allows time for the child to receive additional vaccine doses. Provisional enrollment also applies to transfer students from another school system. A transfer student is an applicant seeking enrollment from one United States elementary or secondary school into another.

At the end of the provisional period, a Certificate of Immunization including all of the required vaccines must be submitted to the child care or school the child is enrolled or attempting to enroll.

Q4: What proof of immunization is required for enrollment in Iowa licensed child cares and schools?

A: In order to attend school or licensed child care, the child must have an Iowa Department of Public Health Certificate of Immunization, Provisional Certificate of Immunization, or Certificate of Immunization Exemption. A brief explanation of each certificate is included below.

- **Certificate of Immunization** - Issued when applicant has a record of age-appropriate immunizations that meet the requirement for licensed child care or school enrollment.
- **Provisional Certificate of Immunization** - Issued when the applicant has received at least one dose of each of the required vaccines but has not completed all the required immunizations or is a transfer student from another U.S. school system.
- **Certificate of Immunization Exemption-Medical** - Issued when the required immunizations would be injurious to the health and well-being of the applicant or member of the applicant's family or household.

Certificate of Immunization Exemption-Religious - Issued when immunization conflicts with a genuine and sincere religious belief. More information regarding immunization certificates are available on the [Immunization Program webpage](#).

Q5: Can a provisional enrollment be extended beyond 60 days?

A: The time allowed for provisional enrollment is as soon as medically feasible to complete the immunization requirements but shall not exceed 60 calendar days. Additional Provisional Certificates may be issued at the end of the 60-day provisional enrollment **only if the applicant has not completed the required immunizations due to minimum interval requirements**. If a Certificate of Immunization is not submitted at the end of the 60-day provisional period, the child shall be excluded from the benefits, activities, and opportunities of the school or licensed child care center until a valid Certificate of Immunization is submitted.

Q6: Can a Provisional Certificate of Immunization be issued for immigrants, refugees, or foreign exchange students who have not received all required immunizations to attend school or licensed child care centers?

A: A Provisional Certificate of Immunization may be issued to a transfer student from another country if the student has received at least one dose of each required vaccines. If at least one dose of each vaccine is not on file for the applicant, the record is not valid. If the child does not have a valid certificate, they shall be excluded from the benefits, activities, and opportunities of the school until a valid certificate of immunization is submitted.

Q7: Is a foreign exchange student's host family able to sign a Certificate of Immunization Exemption-Religious?

A: Many host parents will have the authority to make decisions for treatment in a medical emergency. This does not allow authority to sign or request a religious Certificate of Immunization Exemption. Please see the following information from the [US Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs Exchange Program](#).

Am I the exchange student's legal guardian?

A: No. The exchange student's natural parents remain legal guardians. The student's program takes legal responsibility during the course of the program. Each exchange student's Certificate of Health contains a medical release form so host parents may secure medical treatment in the case of an emergency.

Additional immunization information and resources are available at:

<https://idph.iowa.gov/immmtb/immunization/laws>

Questions regarding Iowa immunization requirements may be directed to Shelly Jensen at 1-800-831-6293 ext. 2 or shelly.jensen@idph.iowa.gov.