

Nonmedical Waiver Rule for Childhood Immunizations in School and Licensed Childcare Programs: Information for Parents/Guardians

In early 2015, Michigan instituted an administrative rule change on nonmedical waivers for childhood immunizations. Parents/guardians seeking to obtain a nonmedical immunization waiver for their child/children who are enrolled in school or licensed childcare programs are required to attend an educational session, where they are provided with information about vaccine-preventable diseases and vaccinations.

Frequently Asked Questions:

Why is this rule important?

Michigan has one of the highest immunization waiver rates in the country, with select counties reporting waiver rates over 10% (that is 1 out of 10 school-aged students that have not received all vaccinations required for school)¹. In addition, individual school buildings have reported even higher waiver rates. High nonmedical waiver rates can leave communities susceptible to diseases such as measles, chickenpox, and pertussis (whooping cough) by undermining community or “herd” immunity. Herd immunity protects vulnerable children who cannot be vaccinated for medical reasons and children with compromised immune systems. Herd immunity can also slow the spread of disease if a high proportion of individuals in that community are immune to the disease. Immunization is one of the most effective ways to protect children from serious diseases and even death.

Who does this rule apply to?

The rule applies to parents/guardians seeking a nonmedical immunization waiver for their child/children who are enrolling in public or private:

- Licensed childcare, preschool, and Head Start programs
- Kindergarten, 7th grade, and any newly enrolled student into the school district

How does this rule affect parents/guardians?

Parents/guardians seeking to claim a nonmedical waiver are required to participate in an immunization-focused discussion with county health department staff. During the discussion, parents/guardians can bring up any immunization-related questions and concerns they may have. The staff will present evidence-based information regarding the risks of vaccine-preventable diseases and the benefits/potential risks (risks consisting mostly of moderate side-effects) of vaccination. This rule preserves the ability of parents/guardians to obtain a nonmedical waiver following the completion of this required educational session.

¹ MDHHS unpublished data

*County Health Department includes the City of Detroit

What is a nonmedical immunization waiver?

A nonmedical waiver is a written statement by parents/guardians describing their religious or philosophical (other) objections to specific vaccine/vaccines. An official State of Michigan Nonmedical Waiver Form will be provided by the county health department.

Will the County Health Department make a copy of the waiver?

The county health department may make a copy of the waiver for their records and provide the parent/guardian with the original. Making a copy of the form is not a violation of the Family Educational Rights Privacy Act (FERPA), because the waiver education is conducted at the county health department before the form is certified and sent to the school. This form is an official State of Michigan Department of Health and Human Services document that records the waiver visit for the county health department.

What is considered a certified nonmedical waiver?

A certified nonmedical waiver is the State of Michigan Immunization Waiver Form. Any new waivers issued should have the revision date of January 1, 2019. A certified nonmedical waiver will:

- Display the county health department's information/stamp.
- Include the child's: name, date of birth, address, name of school/childcare program, telephone number (optional), vaccines being waived with the reason, signed date, as well as signatures of the parent/guardian, and of the county health department authorizing agent completing the immunization education.

A county health department will not issue a waiver without both signatures, as it would be considered an incomplete and invalid waiver.

Waiver forms that are altered in any fashion (including information on the form that may be crossed out) or forms that are not an official MDHHS certified waiver form cannot be accepted by schools/childcare programs.

Can a parent/guardian obtain a certified nonmedical waiver form from a school, childcare program, or healthcare provider?

No, a certified nonmedical State of Michigan waiver can only be obtained at a county health department.

How does a parent/guardian obtain a certified nonmedical waiver?

Parents/guardians are required to contact their county health department to receive immunization waiver education and a current certified State of Michigan Immunization Waiver Form.

¹ MDHHS unpublished data

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What if my child has a medical contraindication to a vaccine?

If your child has a medical reason (that is, a true medical contraindication or precaution) for not receiving a vaccine, a physician (MD/DO) must sign the State of Michigan Medical Contraindication Form.

What documentation are parents/guardians required to submit to their school or childcare program?

1. Parents/guardians are required to submit one of the following documents:
 - A complete immunization record **or**
 - A physician (MD/DO)-signed State of Michigan Medical Contraindication Form **or**
 - A current, certified State of Michigan Nonmedical Immunization Waiver Form
2. If one of the above forms is not submitted, students can be excluded from school or childcare based on the public health code, unless students are in a provisional category. (Children in the provisional category are defined as those who have received 1 or more doses of vaccine but need to wait the recommended time to receive the next dose.)

Where can I find more information?

For more information, please visit www.michigan.gov/immunize > click on *Local Health Departments* > click on *Immunization Waiver Information*.

- The above website provides a complete list of county health departments in Michigan, including phone numbers and addresses.
- The link below is to the MDHHS Communicable Disease Administrative Rules where much of the information referenced in this document can be found.
 - http://dmbinternet.state.mi.us/DMB/ORRDocs/AdminCode/1472_2014-073CH_AdminCode.pdf

¹ MDHHS unpublished data

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