



Administrative Guidelines

Department: Special Services (DSS)

Policy: N/A

Topic: School Immunization Certificate Extension Notice

Revised: July 2019

PROCEDURE

Official Code of Georgia O.C.G.A. § 20-2-771: No child shall be admitted to or attend any school or facility in this state unless the child shall first have submitted a certificate of immunization to the responsible official of the school or facility. The responsible official of any school or facility may grant a 30 calendar day waiver of the certification requirement for a justified reason.

The immunization requirements for school attendance are outlined in the Georgia Immunization Certificate (Form 3231) and the Policy Guides 3231INS and 3231REQ. School personnel, healthcare providers and parents are responsible for seeing that these rules and laws are enforced.

Certificates At student registration, a parent or guardian must submit a valid Certificate of Immunization (Form #3231) if their child is entering school in Georgia for the first time or has been absent for more than 12 months or one school year. If a parent or guardian attempts to register their child without a valid Certificate of Immunization (Form #3231) or attempts to register their child with an expired Certificate of Immunization (Form #3231), the parent or guardian will be asked to have the student's immunization brought up to date before registration is completed.

When a new student enrolls, the principal or their designee may grant a 30- calendar-day waiver of the certification requirement for a justified reason. Justified reasons include but are not limited to:

- Student is affected by the McKinney-Vento Act.
- Parent or legal guardian shows that their child is in-process of completing required immunizations and that immunizations are scheduled with the shortest intervals recommended in the current Official Immunization Schedules
- The Certificate for a child who is in the process of receiving all required vaccines has a date of expiration that relates to the date the next required immunization is due or the date on which a medical exemption must be reviewed.
- A waiver may be extended from the date of first admittance or of first attendance, whichever is earlier, for up to 90 calendar days provided documentation is on file at the school or facility from the local health department or a physician specifying that an immunization sequence has been started and that this immunization time schedule can be completed within the 90 day waiver period, provided confirmation is received during the waiver period from the health department or

physician that immunizations are being received as scheduled, and provided the student under waiver is a transfer student, who is defined as a student who moves from an out-of-state school system to a Georgia school system, or a student entering kindergarten or first grade from out of state.

- Upon expiration of the 30-calendar-day or 90-calendar-day waiver, the child shall not be admitted to or be permitted to attend the school or facility unless the child submits a certificate of immunization. Prior to expiration date, parent or guardian will be notified in writing that their child shall not be permitted to attend school until a new Certificate of Immunization is provided.
- The registrar or the school designee shall inform the school social worker of students who have a waiver that is soon to expire.
- If the student withdraws and then returns, the parent is not allowed another 30 days to provide a certificate or affidavit. Principals are responsible for maintaining accurate follow-up procedures for all waivers. Children affected by the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act are not exempt from immunization requirements.
- McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11431 et seq.): SEC. 722. Grants for State and Local Activities for the Education of Homeless Children and Youths (C) ENROLLMENT – (i) The school selected in accordance with this paragraph shall immediately enroll the homeless child or youth, even if the child or youth is unable to produce records normally required for enrollment, such as previous academic records, medical records, proof of residency, or other documentation. (iii) If the child or youth needs to obtain immunizations, or immunization or medical records, the enrolling school shall immediately refer the parent or guardian of the child or youth to the local educational agency liaison designated under paragraph (1)(J)(ii), who shall assist in obtaining necessary immunizations, or immunization or medical records, in accordance with subparagraph (D). Any student identified as homeless during the registration process should be referred to the homeless liaison. MCS is required to screen for any needed services, including whether they need assistance in obtaining medical records or immunizations. The homeless liaison shall work closely with the family and local health department to immunize students affected by the McKinney-Vento Act. The health department will vaccinate students affected by the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act for a scaled fee, which may be scaled down to no cost to the parent or legal guardian.
- Prior to completing student registration, the registrar or the school designee must check each child's certificate to be sure it is complete, current and includes the following information:
 - Name
 - Birthdate
 - The form must be marked 'Complete for School' (which never expires) or have an expiration date.
 - Immunization certificates marked with an expiration date must be replaced no later than 30 days after the date of expiration.
 - If a new certificate is not submitted, the student cannot be allowed to attend school until he brings a new certificate.
- Even if the Immunization Certificate #3231 is marked 'Complete for School', each student's immunization record shall be checked to verify all required doses have

been administered. See Summary of Georgia Immunization Requirements for Child Care & School Attendance (Rev. 01/2014)

- In the event that a certificate is marked complete but the record fails to show the child received all required doses (or serology for measles, mumps, rubella and varicella or a history or diagnosis of chickenpox disease), the parent or guardian shall be directed to return to the child's primary health care provider or public health center to receive the required immunizations and obtain a new certificate.
- Each certificate must:
 - Be signed by a physician, APRN, or PA licensed in Georgia or a qualified employee of a local Health Department or the State Immunization Program on Certificate. A stamp of a physician, APRN or PA's written signature is permissible when cosigned by an office staff member.
 - Have a printed, typed or stamped name and address of the physician, APRN, PA, health department of Georgia Registry of Immunization Transactions and Services (GRITS) official issuing the certificate.
 - Have a completed date of issue with the month, day and year. A photocopy of faxed copy of the certificate is acceptable.

Exemptions

The Official Code of Georgia provides for only two types of exemptions, O.C.G.A. 20-2-771 (d) and (e). Each student must have one of two items on file – either a valid Georgia Immunization Certificate (Form 3231) or a signed, notarized statement, which is called an affidavit of religious exemption.

Medical Exemption

- ✓ Medical exemptions are used only when a student has a medical condition that keeps him from being able to receive a specific vaccine(s), not all vaccines.
- ✓ A medical exemption must be marked on the Georgia Immunization Certificate (Form 3231). A letter from a physician, Advanced Practice Registered Nurse (APRN) or physician assistant (PA) attached to the certificate will not be accepted as a medical exemption. It must be marked on the certificate.
- ✓ A physician, APRN or PA must re-evaluate the need for a medical exemption at least once a year and issue a new certificate of immunization at that time. The date of expiration on the section of the certificate marked 'medical exemption' should be one year from the date of issue and never be longer than one year.

Religious Exemption

- ✓ For a student to be exempt from immunizations on religious grounds, the parent or guardian must provide the school/facility with a notarized Affidavit of Religious Objection to Immunization.
- ✓ The school/facility must keep the affidavit on file and available for inspection by health officials in lieu of an Immunization Certificate. The affidavit does not expire.

During an epidemic or a threatened epidemic of any disease preventable by an immunization required by the Department of Human Resources, students who have not been immunized may be excluded from the school or facility until (1) they are immunized against the disease, unless they present valid evidence of prior disease, or (2) the epidemic or threat no longer constitutes a significant public health danger.

Unvaccinated Children

When there are barriers to immunization such as transportation, insurance, cost, access to physicians, school officials should contact the school social worker. There are programs such as Vaccines for Children (VFC) program that may provide vaccines to children whose parents or guardians are not able to afford them. A student is eligible for the VFC Program if he or she is younger than 19 years of age and is one of the following:

- Medicaid-eligible
- Uninsured or Underinsured
- American Indian or Alaska Native

Children whose health insurance covers the cost of vaccinations are not eligible for VFC vaccines, even when a claim for the cost of the vaccine and its administration would be denied for payment by the insurance carrier because the plan's deductible had not been met.

- Public health or school officials will perform an annual review of kindergarten and seventh-grade students.
- Immunization documentation must be available at the school and accessible for review during school hours.
- School staff must assist the public health official in locating the immunization documentation for each student.

When the certificates are reviewed, 100 percent of students attending school must have appropriate immunization documentation to meet the requirements of the law.

According to the Official Code of Georgia Annotated (OCGA) 20-2-771, "Any responsible official permitting any child to remain in a school or facility in violation of this Code section, and any parent or guardian who intentionally does not comply with this Code section, shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction thereof, shall be punished by a fine of not more than \$100.00 or by imprisonment for not more than 12 months.

Noncompliant public schools will be reported to the Georgia Department of Public Health's Office of the Inspector General and the Georgia Department of Education (DOE).