

August 9, 2018

Dear Sir or Madam:

Health and Education have a long history of working together to ensure that children in Alberta are healthy and protected from vaccine preventable diseases. Immunization saves lives, prevents health complications and is the most cost effective disease prevention program in health care.

Alberta Health (AH) provides overarching guidelines to Alberta Health Services (AHS) for the school immunization program through the Alberta Immunization Policy. Recent changes in the policy will necessitate school immunization program changes in the coming year. These changes are as follows:

- Shift of routine school immunization program delivery of Hepatitis B and Human Papillomavirus (HPV) immunizations to grade 6 from grade 5
- Review of immunization records for students in grades 1 through 9; in the past immunization review has only been done in grades 1, 5 & 9

With the following changes in place the 2018-2019 School Immunization Program is as follows:

- Grades 1- 9: Review immunization records of all students, and offer relevant vaccines to all children who are not up to date according to Alberta Health recommendations.
- Grade 6: Offer Hepatitis B and Human Papillomavirus (HPV) along with all other vaccines the student is eligible for according to Alberta Health recommendations.
- Grade 9: Offer Tetanus, Diphtheria and Pertussis (combined) vaccine, Meningococcal vaccine along with all other vaccines the student is eligible for according to Alberta Health recommendations.

Your support to communicate these details of the school immunization program to principals and school staff who might be impacted is appreciated. In addition, I would like to highlight some of the possible impacts your school may experience:

- Our immunization program will start earlier in the school year; this will ensure our students are protected earlier, that the increased workload can be managed within the current school year and will minimize scheduling of immunizations during December and June, which are both busy times for schools.
- Offering eligible immunizations to students who are behind on their routine immunizations in grades 1 through 9 may increase the amount of time nurses will require in the schools to deliver the program in a safe and effective manner.
- Effort will be made to ensure that immunizations are bundled to minimize time impacts for both students and teachers.

- Providing a workspace that minimizes interruptions in the immunization room will support safety, efficiency, and confidentiality.

Public Health Nurses are experts on vaccines and the diseases they prevent. They will manage the increased workload to deliver a safe immunization program and continue to support the health needs of schools as they arise. Please encourage your school staff to work with their school nurse to develop school-specific plans to meet the needs of the school community and the School Health Nursing Team.

As more people are immunized, the risk of disease for everyone is reduced. For school staff to learn more information about immunity, immunization, and how to protect themselves and their family, visit www.immunizealberta.ca or call Health Link at 811.

The routine immunization programs offered by Public Health through schools have continued to expand over the years to provide better and broader protection to Alberta students. Our continued partnership is essential for success in promoting healthy students and supporting healthy school environments. Thank you for your support in helping us to deliver the best school-based immunization program possible.

Please contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



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