



FOREST HILLS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Daniel S. Behm, Superintendent

March 2015

Dear Forest Hills Families;

With the start of the 2015-2016 school year, the state of Michigan is placing greater emphasis on children's health regarding the prevention of serious childhood illnesses. Michigan law has changed regarding immunizations and waivers. Effective January 1, 2015, the schools will no longer be allowed to provide waivers for parents to sign. You must receive a certified waiver from the county health department for it to be a valid waiver. The Michigan law requires that parents provide the school with one of the three items prior to the start of school:

1. Completed immunization record
2. Certified nonmedical waiver from the Health Department
3. Medical waiver completed and signed by a physician

If you have chosen to waive your child's immunizations, you must make an appointment at a Kent County Health Department Immunization Clinic. Clinic locations can be found at www.accesskent.com/immunizations. To make an appointment at any of the four locations, please call 616-632-7200.

Medical waivers must be obtained from your physician.

A child who fails to meet the required documentation of immunizations or waivers shall not be admitted to school.

If you have any questions, please contact any of the following:

Kent County Health Department Immunization Clinic	616-632-7200
Kent County Health Department Vision/Hearing Clinic	616-632-7047
Michigan Department of Education	517-373-3324
FHPS District Nurse	616-493-8635

Thank you for your attention to these requirements and keeping our Forest Hills students healthy.

Sincerely,

Daniel S. Behm
Superintendent

Lisa Smith
District Nurse

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Key Points Regarding Claiming a Nonmedical Waiver for Michigan Schools and Licensed Childcares

Michigan recently modified the administrative rules that change how nonmedical waivers for immunizations will be processed for school/childcare programs. The new rule went into effect on January 1, 2015.

With Michigan having one of the highest waiver rates in the country, a proactive approach has been established to help inform everyone regarding the benefits of vaccinations and the risks of disease. Some counties in Michigan have waiver rates as high as 20.7%. This means that more than 20% of the students in those counties haven't gotten all their vaccines. Some school buildings have even higher waiver rates. The hope is that the new rule will help answer any questions/concerns one may have regarding immunizations.

Key Points

- The new rule applies to all children who are enrolled in a public or private:
 - Licensed childcare, preschool, and Head Start programs
 - Kindergarten, 7th grade, and any newly enrolled student into the school district
- The new rule does not take away your right to obtain a nonmedical waiver.
- Nonmedical waivers (religious or philosophical (other) objections) will need to be obtained from a county health department; the schools/childcare centers will not have them.
- Parents/Guardians must follow these steps when requesting a nonmedical waiver:
 - Contact your county health department for an appointment to speak with a health educator.
 - During the visit, there will be an opportunity to have a discussion about immunizations with the county health department staff.
 - If at the end of the visit, you request a nonmedical waiver for your child, you will receive a copy of the current, certified (stamped and signed) State of Michigan Nonmedical Waiver Form.
 - Schools/childcare centers will only accept the current, official State of Michigan form (Current date: January 1, 2015).
 - Forms cannot be altered in any way (such as crossing information out).
 - Take completed, certified waiver form to your child's school or childcare center.
- If your child has a medical reason (a true contraindication or precaution) for not receiving a vaccine, a physician must sign the State of Michigan Medical Contraindication form; this form is available at your doctor's office (not the county health department).
- Based on the public health code, a child without either an up-to-date immunization record, a certified nonmedical waiver form or a physician signed medical waiver form can be excluded from school/childcare.

For more information, please visit www.michigan.gov/immunize > then click on *Local Health Departments* > then click on *Immunization Waiver Information*. There is a list of all the county health departments on this website, along with their addresses and phone numbers.

Information for Parents/Guardians

New Michigan School and Licensed Childcare Immunization Rule for Claiming a Nonmedical Waiver for Immunizations

In 2014, Michigan modified the administrative rules that changed how nonmedical waivers for immunizations will be processed for school and childcare programs. The new rule went into effect on January 1, 2015.

Frequently Asked Questions:

Why is this rule change important?

Michigan has one of the highest waiver rates in the country. Some counties in Michigan have waiver rates as high as 20.7%. This means that more than 20% of the students in those counties haven't gotten all their vaccines. Some school buildings have even higher waiver rates. This leaves communities vulnerable to diseases such as measles, chickenpox, and pertussis (whooping cough). Immunizations are one of the most effective ways to protect children from harmful diseases and even death.

What has the new rule changed for parents/guardians?

Parents/guardians who want to claim a nonmedical waiver will have an opportunity to have a discussion about immunizations with county health department staff and receive information on the benefits of vaccination and the risks of vaccine-preventable diseases. The new rule does not take away a parent's/guardian's right to obtain a nonmedical waiver.

What is a nonmedical waiver?

A nonmedical waiver is a parent's/guardian's written statement indicating their religious or philosophical (other) objections to a particular vaccination(s).

Who does this new rule apply to?

The new rule applies to all children who are enrolled in a public or private:

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

What does certified, nonmedical waiver mean?

Certified, nonmedical waiver means that the official State of Michigan Immunization Waiver Form (current date: January 1, 2015) is used and the county health department stamp and signature of the authorizing agent (county health department staff) completing the immunization education with the parent/guardian is on the form.

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

No, the certified nonmedical waiver can only be obtained at a county health department.

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

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

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

This new rule does not change the existing process for medical contraindications for vaccination. If your child has a medical reason (a true contraindication or precaution) for not receiving a vaccine, a physician must sign the State of Michigan Medical Contraindication form, which is available at your doctor's office (not the county health department). This form must be completed and signed by a physician before it can be submitted to the school or childcare center.

What documentation will parents/guardians need to submit to their school or childcare center?

1. Parents/guardians will need to submit documentation of one of these items to the school or childcare center:
 - A completed, certified State of Michigan Nonmedical Immunization Waiver form, or
 - A physician signed State of Michigan Medical Contraindication form, or
 - A complete immunization record

If a completed immunization record or a certified waiver form are not turned in, then the student can be excluded from school or childcare based on the public health code, unless the student is in a dose waiting (provisional) period. Dose waiting period means that the student still needs an immunization for school/childcare, but is not recommended to receive that dose at that time.

2. Waiver forms that are altered in any way (such as information on the form is crossed out) cannot be accepted by the schools/childcares.

Where can I find more information?

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

There is a list of all the county health departments on this website, along with their phone numbers and addresses.