



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Region IV Public Health
Clark, Cowlitz, Skamania, Wahkiakum counties
and Cowlitz Tribe

Health Advisory

Please deliver a copy of the accompanying alert to each provider in your organization.

Thank you

Questions regarding this alert may be directed to the office of:

**Alan Melnick, MD, MPH
Health Officer**

**Jennifer Vines, MD, MPH
Deputy Health Officer**

**Clark County Public Health
Cowlitz County Health Department
Skamania County Health Department
Wahkiakum County Department of Health and Human Services
(360) 397-8412
Please Distribute**

Categories of Health Alert messages:

Health Alert: conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.

Health Advisory: provides important information for specific incident for situation; may not require immediate action.

Health Update: provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; no immediate action necessary.

HEALTH Advisory

June 17, 2011



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TO: Physicians and Other Health Care Providers

FROM: Alan Melnick, MD, MPH, CPH, Health Officer
Jennifer Vines, MD, MPH, Deputy Health Officer

RE: Changes to School and Child Care Immunization Exemptions

On July 22, 2011, a new law goes into effect in Washington State that could have the positive effect of boosting immunization rates among children. The law requires a licensed health care provider to sign the [Certificate of Exemption](#) for a parent or guardian to exempt their child from school and child care immunization requirements. The signature verifies that the provider gave the parent or guardian information about the benefits and risks of immunization. A parent or guardian can also turn in a signed letter from a health care provider stating the same information.

The law applies to exemptions requested after July 22, 2011. A health care provider doesn't need to sign the form for parents or guardians who demonstrate membership in a church or religious group that does not allow a health care provider to provide medical treatment to a child.

Health care providers who can sign the exemption form or write a letter include physicians (M.D.), physician assistants (P.A.), osteopaths (D.O.), naturopaths (N.D.), and advanced registered nurse practitioners (A.R.N.P.) who are currently licensed in Washington. These providers can sign the exemption form regardless of whether they give vaccinations or not. Signatures by registered nurses (R.N.) or licensed practical nurses (L.P.N.) are not acceptable.

The law doesn't define what benefit and risk information needs to be shared. The licensed health care provider signing the exemption form must decide what information to cover. Many providers already have this type of information. These resources are free and available on the Department of Health website at <http://www.doh.wa.gov/cfh/immunize/providers/exemption-info.htm>:

- [Plain Talk About Childhood Immunization](#) (Department of Health booklet in English and Spanish)
- [Questions and Answers](#) (Department of Health)
- [Vaccine Information Statements](#) (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
- [Facts About Childhood Vaccines and other materials](#) (Vaccine Education Center, Children's Hospital of Philadelphia)

Office visits are not required before an exemption form gets signed. Providers can decide what they think is necessary. Some may want to discuss it with the parent or guardian face-to-face and ask they make an appointment. A provider may request the form be dropped off for a signature if they have already had this discussion or supplied them with information in the past. Either scenario is acceptable as long as the provider feels confident that the parent or guardian received the necessary information before he or she signs the form.

For more information about the new law, including [Frequently Asked Questions for Health Care Providers](#), see <http://www.doh.wa.gov/cfh/immunize/providers/exemption-info.htm>.