

Nonmedical Waiver Rule for Childhood Immunizations in School and Licensed Childcare: 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 on behalf of their child/children who are enrolled in school or licensed child-care 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 some counties reporting waiver rates up to 12.5% (that is, more than 12% of school-age students in these places have not received all vaccinations). In addition, individual school buildings have reported even higher waiver rates. High nonmedical waiver rates can leave communities susceptible to the entry of diseases such as measles, chickenpox, and pertussis (whooping cough) by undermining community or “herd” immunity that protects vulnerable children (for example, 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 are immune to the disease in a community. Immunization is one of the most effective ways to protect children from harmful diseases and even death.

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, immunization-related questions and concerns of parents/guardians can be brought up for discussion with the county health department staff. The staff will present evidence-based information regarding the risks of vaccine-preventable diseases and the benefits/risks (mostly moderate side-effects) of vaccination. This rule preserves the ability of parents/guardians to obtain a nonmedical waiver following completion of this required educational session.

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, on a form provided by the county health department.

Who does this rule apply to?

The rule applies to parents seeking an immunization waiver on behalf of their children who are enrolling in a public or private:

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

What is considered a certified nonmedical waiver?

A certified nonmedical waiver is the State of Michigan Immunization Waiver Form with a revision date of January 1, 2016, displaying the county health department stamp and signatures of the authorizing agent completing the immunization education and the parent/guardian.

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

No, a certified nonmedical 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.

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

This rule does not change the existing process for medical contraindications to vaccination. If your child has a medical reason (that is, 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, and not the county health department). This form must be completed and signed by a physician before it can be submitted to a school or child-care center.

What documentation are parents/guardians required to submit to their school or child-care center?

1. Parents/guardians are required to submit one of the following documents:

- A complete immunization record or
- A physician-signed State of Michigan Medical Contraindication Form or
- A current, certified State of Michigan Nonmedical Immunization Waiver Form

If one of the above forms is not submitted, then students can be excluded from school or childcare based on the public health code, unless students are in a provisional category. (Provisional is defined as a child who has received 1 or more doses of vaccine, however they need to wait the recommended time to receive the next dose)

2. Waiver forms that are altered in any fashion (for example: information on the form is crossed out) cannot be accepted by schools/child-care programs.

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*.

- The above website provides a complete list of county health departments in Michigan, including phone numbers and addresses.