



TO: Chair and Members of the Board of Health

FROM: Dr Chris Mackie Medical Officer of Health

DATE: 2017 September, 21

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## 2017 LEGISLATIVE AND REGULATORY AMENDMENTS UNDER THE IMMUNIZATION OF SCHOOL PUPILS ACT

### **Recommendation**

*It is recommended that Report No. 049-17 re: 2017 Legislative and Regulatory Amendments under the Immunization of School Pupils Act be received for information.*

### **Key Points**

- Starting September 1 2017, parents who request a non-medical vaccine exemption are required to complete an immunization education session at their local Public Health Unit in addition to submitting a valid affidavit (Statement of Conscience or Religious Belief form).
- Pending proclamation of approved legislation, Health Care Providers will be required to report vaccines administered to children and youth to their local Public Health Unit.

### **Background**

Earlier this year, the Minister of Health and Long Term Care announced two amendments to the Immunization of School Pupils Act (ISPA) as part of Immunization 2020, a five-year strategy to improve the overall effectiveness and efficiency of Ontario's publicly funded immunization system:

- Parents and guardians considering not immunizing their children for non medical reasons would be required to participate in an education session delivered by their local public health in addition to submitting a valid affidavit (Statement of Conscience or Religious Belief form).
- Health care providers would be required to report any vaccines (regulated under ISPA) they administer to children and youth directly to their local public health unit.

The education component amendment was proclaimed on September 1, 2017. The amendment requiring health care providers to report vaccines administered has not yet been proclaimed.

### **Immunization Education Session**

Public Health Units (PHUs) have been provided with an education module, transcript and supplementary fact sheets to assist in the planning and delivery of the immunization education session. The content of the immunization education session has been standardized across the province and addresses key topics on the risks and benefits of immunization, Immunization of School Pupils Act legislation and specific details on vaccine safety. Only one parent is required to complete the education session and only one education session is required per family.

Parents are responsible for:

- Completing an in-person immunization education session at their local Public Health Unit
- Completing the Statement of Conscience of Religious Belief Affidavit Form by swearing or affirming in front of a Commissioner for Taking Affidavits

- Submitting both the signed Statement of Conscience of Religious Belief Affidavit Form and Vaccine Education Certificate to their local Public Health Unit
- Maintaining a personal record of these documents

Public Health Units are responsible for:

- Delivering the immunization session to parents at the PHU
- Providing the Vaccine Education Certificate, signed and dated by the Medical Officer of Health (MOH) delegate to parents once they have completed the session
- Validating the documents submitted by parents
- Updating the information in the provincial immunization repository (creating an exemption record for the schoolchildren of parents who have made a valid request for a non-medical exemption)
- Ensuring that parents are aware of their responsibility to maintain a personal record of the exemption documents

## **Conclusion**

The legislative and regulatory education amendments that came into force on September 1, 2017 are intended to strengthen the vaccine exemption process and help parents make an informed decision about their child's routine health care. The changes are based on actions outlined in the Immunization 2020: Modernizing Ontario's Publicly Funded Immunization Program. The other legislative amendments made to the ISPA regarding health care providers reporting of administered vaccines are expected to come into force at a future date.

This report was prepared by the Vaccine Preventable Diseases Team, Environmental Health Infectious Diseases Division.



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