

September 26, 2017

Dear Public School Superintendents and Principals of Independent Schools

Re: School Immunization Program Updates

This letter is to inform you of changes to the school based immunization program in Grade 6 and Grade 9 which includes mature minor consent in Grade 9, vaccine changes in Grade 6, the use of personalized consent forms in certain areas, and a reminder about privacy standards.

A. Mature Minor Consent for School-Based Grade 9 Immunizations

The provision of mature minor consent has been included in BC legislation under the *Infants Act*, and the BC Court of Appeal has outlined the duty of healthcare professionals to involve minors in healthcare decision-making, when the minor has the capacity to do so. Mature minor consent stipulates that a youth who demonstrates an understanding of the benefits and risks of a health service can consent to or refuse that service **independent of a parent or representative**, and is applicable to immunization.

In the 2017/18 school year, all Grade 9 students, including students with parent/guardian refusals will have the opportunity to provide mature minor consent for immunization. Mature minor consent is the standard practice in British Columbia, and its application in schools respects youth in making decisions for their own health, minimizes the risk of a missed immunization opportunity, and ensures immunization services are delivered within the legislation.

Interior Health supports a collaborative model of consent whereby students and parents/guardians are encouraged to discuss immunizations together. In situations where parent/guardian and student decisions differ, the right of the student to make their own health care decisions takes precedence over that of the parent/guardian.

The process for obtaining consent is as follows:

1. Written information which includes a consent form and the HealthLink BC files [Grade 9 Immunizations in BC](#) and [The Infants Act, MMC and Immunization](#) will be provided to schools to distribute to students to take home.
2. Parent/guardian/representative(s) and the student will be encouraged to review the written information and make a decision about immunization together.
3. The parent/guardian/representative(s) signs the consent form, affirming or declining the vaccine(s), and returns it to the school.

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4. Either prior to or at the time of the school clinic all students will be informed of the vaccines being offered, their rights as a mature minor to consent to health care including immunization, and how to access health care.
5. Students without signed consent forms or with parental refusal will be offered the opportunity to consent to immunization.
6. Students will also have the right to decline immunization on their own behalf.
7. Students will be given a copy of their immunization record.

B. Vaccine Changes

Commencing this school year, HPV9 (Gardasil®9) will be offered to both boys and girls in Grade 6 as part of the routine school immunization program.

C. Personalized Consents Forms

This year Interior Health will use a personalized consent for each Grade 6 and Grade 9 student in both public and independent schools in Kamloops, the Central Okanagan, and Kootenay Boundary areas. All other areas will continue to use generic consent forms.

D. Privacy & Securing Records

In order to keep their student's information private, parent/guardian/representative(s) will be asked to return signed consents SEALED in the envelope provided. We also request that schools keep these envelopes in a secure compartment until the School Nurse is able to pick them up.

Where can I obtain more information?

For questions or concerns related to mature minor consent please contact me directly via e-mail silvina.mema@interiorhealth.ca

Any questions about vaccine changes, personalized consents, or privacy and security information should be directed to Issy Aguiar at 250-980-4808 or via email issy.aguiar@interiorhealth.ca

We encourage you to share this information with your schools, and look forward to working with them to promote good health through our immunization program.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Silvina Mema". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal line.

Silvina Mema, MD MSc FRCPC
Medical Health Officer

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