

Early Childhood Management Services

Quality Standard Area 2. Immunisation Policy Early Childhood Education

Immunisation Policy

Purpose

This policy outlines the requirements of ECMS in relation to children's immunisation status.

In accordance with the Public Health Amendment (No Jab, No Play) Act 2015, from 1st January 2016, all children enrolled in an early childhood education and care service are required to be fully vaccinated for their age. This law applies to all early childhood education and care services in Victoria.

In 2018, further strengthening of these regulations were implemented requiring all services to ensure that parents and carers provide an updated Immunisation History Statement as evidence that their child continues to be up to date with their immunisations at least twice per year.

Further changes were made to the legislation in December 2019, updating disease exclusion criteria, introducing infringement penalties for failure to exclude non-immunised child during a preventable disease outbreak, and providing clarity on reporting lines of infectious diseases to the Department of Health.

Medical Professionals are the responsible body for reporting a preventable disease to the Department of Health

Scope

This policy applies to all ECMS staff, students on placement, volunteers, parents/guardians, children, and others attending ECMS services.

Background

Legislative requirements

Before a child can be enrolled, and commence attending, (see *ECMS Enrolment Policy*) services will have to first obtain evidence from the parent that the child is:

- Fully immunised for their age. The only acceptable certificate for proof of immunisation is an Immunisation History Statement (no greater than 2 months old) from the Australian Childhood Immunisation Register (ACIR) OR
- On a vaccination catch-up program OR

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- Unable to be fully immunised for medical reasons (exemptions and contraindications are to be listed on Immunisation History Statement from ACIR. Doctors letter no longer accepted) OR
- Eligible for the 16-week grace period

‘Conscientious objection’ is no longer an exemption under the legislation.

Under Federal legislation, parents who do not fully immunise their children (up to 19 years of age) will cease to be eligible for Child Care Subsidy and the Family Tax Benefit Part A end of year supplement (family assistance payments) and the Kindergarten Funding Subsidy.

Grace Period

Under the law, children experiencing vulnerability will be eligible to enrol into services under a [grace period](#) (16 weeks) without providing proof of immunisation. This allows the child to attend services, whilst the parent seeks information and assistance to get their child’s immunisations up to date.

During the 16-week grace period, which commences on the first day of the child’s attendance at the service, the service is required to take reasonable steps to obtain the required immunisation documentation.

The Department of Health defines children experiencing vulnerability as:

- Children evacuated from their place of residence due to an emergency such as a flood or bushfire
- Children in emergency care under the Children, Youth, and Families Act 2005
- Children in the care of an adult who is not their parent due to exceptional circumstances such as illness or incapacity
- Children identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
- Children whose parents hold a Health Care Card, Pensioner Concession Card, a Veterans Affairs Gold or White card
- Children from multiple births of triplets or more
- Children who are refugees and asylum seekers
- Children known to child protection
- Children referred to Child FIRST
- Other circumstances as made by the Secretary to the Department of Health (DH).

Medical Exemptions

Some children may be exempt from the requirement to be fully vaccinated on medical grounds. The Department of Education and Training (DET) outlines these reasons as:

- Where the child has experienced an anaphylactic reaction to a previous dose of a particular vaccine
- An anaphylactic reaction to any vaccine component
- Has a disease which lowers immunity

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- Is having treatment that lowers immunity.

Parents will be required to consult their GP where they believe their child may require a medical exemption. Where this is the case the GP must complete and sign a Medicare Immunisation Exemption – Medical Contraindication Form and send this to the Australian Childhood Immunisation Register.

Prior to commencement at the service, the parents must obtain an updated Immunisation History Statement from the Australian Childhood Immunisation Register and then provide the Immunisation History Statement to the service.

Exclusion

Legislation **does not** require the service to exclude enrolled children who are not up to date with immunisations (except in the case of a vaccine-preventable disease outbreak) the purpose of this is to encourage immunisation, not to create a barrier to early childhood education and care. This needs to be assessed on a case-by-case basis by the Area Manager and Nominated Supervisor.

Staff

ECMS strongly encourages that all staff are immunised against those infectious diseases that are stated on the National Immunisation Schedule. The Federal Government Department of Health provides best practice advice based on The Australian Immunisation Handbook regarding immunisation of staff who work with young children. This advice recommends the following vaccinations that services may consider for staff members:

- Whooping cough (pertussis)
- Measles, Mumps, Rubella (MMR)
- Chickenpox (varicella)
- Hepatitis A and Hepatitis B
- Seasonal Influenza.

In, addition staff are also strongly encouraged to access the [Australian Government's COVID 19 Vaccination program](#).

If a staff member has not been immunised, he/she will be excluded from the children's service upon an outbreak of any of these preventable diseases for the recommended minimum period of exclusion.

Roles & Responsibilities

Director ECE	Accountable for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring that the requirements of the No Jab No Play legislation and ECMS Policy are implemented consistently in all ECMS services.
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Area Managers	Responsible for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring and supporting implementation of the Policy in the services they manage.
Nominated Supervisors/Centre Directors	Responsible for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring Immunisation History Statements are up to date and stored with the child's enrolment form Support parents/carers to comply with legislation by providing information on referral or support services such as local council immunisation services or General Practitioners (GP) Monitoring the currency of immunisation status for children in the services they manage Request parents and carers provide an updated immunisation history every 6 months Supporting parents of vulnerable children to obtain the required immunisation documentation to meet the requirements for enrolment in the service. Monitor children with exemptions to Immunisations (and those within the catch-up or grace periods) and exclude these enrolled children if there is a vaccine-preventable disease outbreak Have an awareness that there are infringement penalties that may apply for failure to comply with excluding a child who is not immunised, on a catch-up schedule, or in a grace period in the event of a preventable disease outbreak Understand that the responsibility of notifying the Department of Health of a diagnosis of a preventable disease at the service is the responsibility of Medical Professionals and not ECMS or its representatives Ensuring that parents receive regular information in relation to their requirements on immunisation and enrolment procedures.
Employees, Volunteers, Contractors, and Student Placement Workers	Responsible for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting the implementation of this policy and procedure.
Parents/Guardians	Responsible for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing a current (no greater than 2 months old) Immunisation History Statement from the Australian Childhood Immunisation Register Consulting their GP where they believe their child may require a medical exemption

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a current Immunisation History Statement that lists medical contraindications from the Australian Childhood Immunisation Register (if applicable)
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Sources

Related Policy and Procedure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Safety Culture Policy • Child Safety Policy and Procedure • Confidential Information Policy • Enrolment Policy - Kindergarten & Early Learning Centres • Infectious Diseases Policy and Procedure • Medical Conditions Policy • Orientation Policy
Relevant Legislation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education and Care Services National Regulations 2012 (amended version 2020) Reg-88, 90, 160- 162, 16, and 181-182. • Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010 (amended version 2018) Reg 167. • Public Health Amendment (No Jab, No Play) Act 2015. (Amendments January 2016, November 2018, and December 2019) • Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2019
Sources and Further Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Jab No Play Toolkit • No Jab No Play Templates • Exclusion Tables for Primary Schools and Children's Services

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