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Memorandum To:

Directors of Education
Supervisory Officers
Secretary-Treasurers of School Authorities
Director of Provincial Schools Branch

From:

George Zegarac
Deputy Minister of Education

Dr. Arlene King
Chief Medical Officer of Health

Date:

June 13, 2014

Subject:

Improving the Immunization of Students: Regulatory
Amendments under the *Immunization of School Pupils Act*
(ISPA)

As a follow up to the Ministry of Education's September 19, 2013 memo regarding new student reporting requirements for immunizations, we are now writing to ask for your assistance in the final implementation phase of new requirements under the *Immunization of School Pupils Act* (ISPA). We also want to provide an update on the first implementation wave and the next steps of Panorama: a single integrated public health information management system.

New Immunization Requirements for School Attendance

On September 18, 2013, regulatory amendments were made under the ISPA. Beginning in the 2014/15 school year, students between the ages of 4 to 17 attending school will require proof of immunization against meningococcal disease, pertussis (whooping cough), and, for children born in 2010 or later, varicella (chickenpox). This is in addition to existing requirements for proof of immunization against other designated diseases. The number of shots (doses) required for tetanus, diphtheria, polio and mumps has also been updated. Requirements for measles and rubella immunizations have not changed.

ISPA requires that parents of children attending elementary or secondary school provide proof of their child's immunization against designated diseases. Children who do not have the required immunization records or valid exemptions may be temporarily suspended from school by order of the local medical officer of health.

The goal of the regulatory amendments is to improve the health and safety of Ontario's school children, and reduce the risk of vaccine-preventable disease outbreaks. The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) has prepared resources to inform parents of these new requirements, including a School Immunization Checklist (attached) and a Public Health Unit locator. We ask for your assistance in sharing these resources with your parent body, and directing them to www.ontario.ca/vaccines for more information. For example, you may wish to include these resources on your board websites, school newsletters, and school council meetings.

Panorama: Wave 1 Updates and Province-Wide Implementation

In August 2013, provincial public health care professionals began to use Panorama to support their immunization programs. This integrated system is designed to help public health respond to infectious disease outbreaks, initiate targeted and mass immunization response plans and strategies, provide a provincial immunization record repository to eventually replace the paper-based "yellow card", and ensure effective and timely vaccine distribution and inventory management. Panorama is intended to be used by medical officers of health as a provincial immunization repository focussed on school children to improve the immunization status of students. This will result in better health outcomes with fewer student illnesses from vaccine-preventable diseases, as well as reduce the number of school suspension notices being sent to parents and the number of days students are suspended from school as a result of inaccurate or incomplete immunization records.

Panorama is being phased in with a first group of six public health units (PHUs) now using Panorama to record and track students' immunization records (Niagara Region, Grey Bruce, Huron County, Thunder Bay District, Oxford County and Perth District). The 18 school boards which fall within the catchment area of the first group of PHUs began submitting files containing student data using the standardized electronic process. We ask for your continued support and commitment as the remaining 30 PHUs and 54 school boards implement the new standardized process by August 2014.

The attached FAQ document is intended to assist you and your staff with any questions that may arise during the implementation of these initiatives. For further information, please do not hesitate to contact your Regional Office.

Sincerely,

Original signed by

George Zegarac
Deputy Minister of Education

Original signed by

Arlene King, MD, MHSc, FRCPC
Chief Medical Officer of Health

Attachments:

Regulatory Amendments Under the Immunization of School Pupils Act: FAQs for School Boards
School Immunization Checklist (information flyer for parents developed by MOHLTC)

c: Medical Officers of Health and Associate Medical Officers of Health, Public Health Units