



# DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA SCHOOL IMMUNIZATION POLICY

## Frequently Asked Questions - School Immunization Requirements

[District law](#)<sup>1</sup> and [regulations](#)<sup>2</sup> require schools in the District of Columbia to verify student compliance with the pediatric [immunization requirements](#)<sup>3</sup> as part of enrollment and attendance. If a student is not compliant, the school is required to immediately notify the parent, guardian, or adult student in writing of the missing immunization(s). If a student in grade pre-K 3, kindergarten, 7, or 11 does not come into compliance before Dec. 4, 2023, the school is required to temporarily exclude the student from school until the immunization certification is secured by the school.

### 1. Why are immunizations (vaccines) important?

Many infectious diseases, such as measles, are highly contagious and dangerous for our youngest District residents. In order to prevent the spread of these infectious diseases, it is vital that all students are fully immunized before entering school. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has resources with information on the importance of immunizations, including [Common Questions About Vaccines](#),<sup>4</sup> [Making the Vaccine Decision: Addressing Common Concerns](#),<sup>5</sup> and [Vaccine \(Shot\) for Human Papillomavirus](#).<sup>6</sup>

### 2. Which immunizations are required for my child?

Requirements are set by DC Health and are based on the child's age.<sup>7</sup> For a list of required immunizations, consult DC Health's [Immunization Requirements](#).<sup>3</sup>

### 3. How do I know which shots my child has already received?

If you have questions about your child's immunization history, contact your health provider and request a copy of your child's immunization history or call the DC Health Immunization Program at (202) 576-7130.

### 4. How does my child's school know whether my child has been immunized?

When a child receives an immunization in the District of Columbia, the health provider adds it to the District of Columbia Immunization Information System (DOCIIS), a data system that monitors immunization information for residents and visitors to the District. Schools access DOCIIS to track compliance with immunization requirements. Schools may also keep paper records of your child's immunization history in their school health file. Note: If your child received an immunization outside of the District of Columbia, it may not show up in DOCIIS.

### 5. How do I submit proof of immunization to my child's school?

If DOCIIS does not show that your child has received the necessary immunizations, your school will request proof of immunization. Submit proof of immunization via a written record, such as a completed [Universal Health Certificate](#) (recommended) or other official record from your health provider that includes the provider's official stamp, seal, or

signature.<sup>3</sup> The school will make sure this document is entered in DOCIIS and added to your child's school health file. An appointment card from a health provider does not meet the requirements for proof of immunization.

### 6. If my child does not have all their immunizations, will they be able to attend school?

Immunizations are important for all students to keep themselves and school communities safe. At certain ages, students are required to receive additional immunizations. These immunizations align to prior to grades pre-K 3, kindergarten, 7 and 11. Students in those grades may only attend school for a limited time without proof of immunization. If a school determines that your child in grade pre-K 3, kindergarten, 7 or 11 has not received the required immunizations, it will send home a written notification to you stating that you have until Dec. 4 to present proof of immunization, or your child will not be allowed to return to school until they have received the required immunizations and provided documentation to the school.

### 7. What will happen if my child does not get all their required immunizations?

Schools will identify non-compliant students and send home a written notification identifying the missing immunizations.

For students in grades pre-K 3, kindergarten, 7 and 11, the school will also send a warning notification of temporary exclusion, stating that you have until Dec. 4 to submit proof of the required immunizations. You should make an appointment with your child's health provider as soon as possible after receiving the written notification.

If proof of immunization is not submitted to the school before Dec. 4, your child will not be allowed to return to school until they have received the required immunizations and provided documentation to the school.

Your child will receive an "unexcused absence" for each missed school day until the proof of immunization is submitted to the school. When the school receives the proof of immunization, your child will be allowed to return to school and activities and each missed day will be reclassified as an "excused absence."



**8. What do I do if I believe my child has all their required immunizations, but the school tells me that my child is missing one or more?**

Contact your child's health provider to confirm whether your child has received the required immunization(s). If the health provider confirms your child did receive the immunization(s), ask for written proof of the immunization(s) that you can give to the school. This written proof must include the health provider's official stamp, seal, or signature.

If the health provider informs you that your child has not received the required immunization(s), schedule an appointment as soon as possible for your child to receive [the immunization\(s\)](#). At the appointment, have the health provider complete the [Universal Health Certificate](#) (recommended) or provide another form of written proof that includes the provider's official stamp, seal, or signature.<sup>3</sup> Present the documents to your child's school to be added to their school health file.

**9. What if my child cannot be immunized?**

Medical exemptions are available for children for whom immunizations are medically inadvisable. Medical exemptions must be signed by a private physician, their representative, or the public health authority. Religious exemptions may be obtained via e-mail request to [doh.immunization@dc.gov](mailto:doh.immunization@dc.gov). You may also opt out of the HPV vaccination for your child by submitting the DC Health [Annual Human Papillomavirus \(HPV\) Vaccination Opt-Out Certificate](#) to the school.<sup>8</sup>

**10. What if the earliest appointment I could get for my child is after the start of the school year?**

Health providers may be busy during the start of school. Plan ahead to ensure your child receives all required immunizations prior to the start of the school year. A list of [pediatric immunization locations](#) is available on the DC Health website.<sup>3</sup>

**11. What if I do not have a primary care provider or if I do not have medical insurance?**

If you do not have a primary care provider or doctor, call your insurance company to find one close to your home. If you do not have medical insurance, contact [DC Health Link](#) or contact the Citywide Call Center by dialing 3-1-1.<sup>9</sup>

**12. What if I have documentation for immunizations that were received in another country?**

If your child received their immunizations in another country, direct questions about the documentation to your school nurse or your school's immunization point of contact (IPOC). They will work with DC Health to determine whether the documentation is acceptable to prove immunization compliance.

**13. What if I have questions about immunizations or the immunization requirements for school attendance and activities?**

For questions about immunizations and available resources, contact the DC Health Immunization Program ([www.dchealth.dc.gov/page/schools-and-licensed-childcare-development-centers](http://www.dchealth.dc.gov/page/schools-and-licensed-childcare-development-centers)) or call (202) 576-7130. For questions about the school immunization policy, contact your school or local education agency (LEA) central office. You may also contact [OSSE](#) at [OSSE.SchoolHealth@dc.gov](mailto:OSSE.SchoolHealth@dc.gov).<sup>10</sup>

This FAQ document will be updated over time.  
Last update date: July 17, 2023.

Endnotes

- 1 DC Official Code § 38–501 et seq.: [code.dccouncil.us/dc/council/code/titles/38/chapters/5/](http://code.dccouncil.us/dc/council/code/titles/38/chapters/5/)
- 2 DCMR 5-E § 5300 et seq.: [dcregs.dc.gov/common/dcmr/rulelist.aspx?ChapterNum=5-e53&chapterid=258](http://dcregs.dc.gov/common/dcmr/rulelist.aspx?ChapterNum=5-e53&chapterid=258)
- 3 [dchealth.dc.gov/service/school-health-services-program](http://dchealth.dc.gov/service/school-health-services-program)
- 4 [cdc.gov/vaccines/parents/FAQs.html](http://cdc.gov/vaccines/parents/FAQs.html)
- 5 [cdc.gov/vaccines/parents/why-vaccinate/vaccine-decision.html](http://cdc.gov/vaccines/parents/why-vaccinate/vaccine-decision.html)
- 6 [cdc.gov/vaccines/parents/diseases/hpv.html?CDC\\_AA\\_refVal=https%3A%2F%2F](http://cdc.gov/vaccines/parents/diseases/hpv.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2F)
- 7 DCMR 22-B §§ 130-152: [dcregs.dc.gov/Common/DCMR/RuleList.aspx?ChapterNum=22-B1&ChapterId=576](http://dcregs.dc.gov/Common/DCMR/RuleList.aspx?ChapterNum=22-B1&ChapterId=576)
- 8 [dchealth.dc.gov/page/schools-and-licensed-childcare-development-centers](http://dchealth.dc.gov/page/schools-and-licensed-childcare-development-centers)
- 9 [dchealthlink.com/](http://dchealthlink.com/)
- 10 [osse.dc.gov/immunization](http://osse.dc.gov/immunization)

