



Regional School Unit 5
Durham • Freeport • Pownal

"To inspire and support every learner by challenging minds, building character, sparking creativity, and nurturing passions."

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February 20, 2020

I am writing to follow up on a message from Dr. Stephanie Phelps, RSU 5 school physician, that was published in our recent newsletters. There are two points in the letter that have caused some confusion that I would like to clarify.

In Dr. Phelps' message, she states that "adults working in schools must also have had these vaccines, or show immunity to these infections." Nothing in Maine's statutes mandates immunization of school employees. However, in RSU5, Community Programs is part of our district, and they run the Laugh and Learn Programs which involve before and after care programs as well as a preschool. The Department of Health and Human Services does mandate immunization for staff that work in licensed "childcare facilities." Any staff that work in our Laugh and Learn programs are required to obtain and have available a Certificate of Immunization for measles, mumps, rubella, tetanus and diphtheria, for any staff born after 1956.

The second area of confusion that arose was the sentence that read, "Under LD798 parents can still choose to "space out" vaccines. According to Emily Poland, school consultant, at the Department of Education, she offered a further explanation of this statement:

"LD 798 does not specifically state that vaccines can or can't be spaced out. However, if a student is on an alternative vaccine schedule under the direction of their medical provider, they would be able to write a medical exemption while in that process. The following are ways in which spacing out of the vaccines can occur:

1. The parent provides the school with a written assurance that the child will be immunized by private effort within ninety days of enrolling (officially registering) in school or first attendance in school classes, whichever date is the earliest. The granting of this 90-day period is a one-time provision. A child transferring from one school to another within the state may not be granted a second 90-day period, however, a period of 21 calendar days may be granted to allow for the transfer of health records from one school to another.
2. The parent grants written consent for the child's immunization by a public health officer, physician, nurse or other authorized person in their employ, or acting as an agent of the school, where such immunization programs are in effect. (This type of program does not currently exist in RSU5.)
3. The parent (or child) presents to the school each year a physician's written statement that immunization against one or more of the diseases may be medically inadvisable."

I hope that this further explains those statements in Dr. Phelps' original message, and our purpose was to help inform potential voters. You can read LD 798 in its entirety at:

http://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/bills/display_ps.asp?ld=798&PID=1456&snum=129

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have further questions.

Sincerely,
Becky Foley
Superintendent of Schools