Immunization Requirements for School Children Frequently Asked Questions
Updated 7.13.2026

This document generally constitutes guidance representing Maine Department of Education (DOE) and Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) interpretation of Public Law 2019, Ch. 154 that went into effect on September 1, 2021, and the amended joint rule, Immunization Requirements for School Children (Rule), which took effect May 25, 2026. This document is not intended to be a replacement of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) or consultation with legal counsel.

Updated	Reason
10.25.2022	Clarification of titers (question 18)
5.13.2024	Clarification of protections and limitations of McKinney Vento (question 19)
12.5.2024	Added table for tracking changes. Removed link to the sample exemption form (question 7)
7.13.2026	Clarified immunization requirements for PreK partnerships (question 2); Added question 3; Removed language specific to transitioning to 2021 update to the rule (question 16; Removed question 17 as it was related to 2021 transition to two dose requirement of varicella vaccine; Updated link (public health nursing) (question 19); McKinney-Vento, question 18 response was amended; Added questions 20-23; Adjusted numbering due to addition/deletion of questions.

1. Are child-care immunization requirements different from school immunization requirements?
Yes, child-care immunization requirements (located through a link here Childcare Immunization Standards) are administered through the following three rules governed by Maine DHHS Office of Child and Family Services (OCFS):

- **10-148 CMR Chapter 32 - Rules for the Licensing of Child Care Facilities**
- **10-144 CMR Chapter 33 - Family Childcare Provider Licensing Rule**
- **10-148 CMR Chapter 36 - Rules for the Licensing of Nursery Schools**

There is a sample medical exemption form for child care on the Maine Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics website. For questions related to the child-care immunization law, email either Pattie Collins (Pattie.Collins@maine.gov) or Jennifer Welch (Jennifer.S.Welch@maine.gov) at the Maine DHHS OCFS Children's Licensing and Investigation Services.

2. Does this rule apply to public PreK and private preschools? Are they considered "child-care" programs or schools for vaccine requirements?
For this rule, a "school" includes any public or private program that teaches children from pre-kindergarten through 12th grade. Public PreK programs that are not connected to a child-care program must follow the vaccine rules for schools. All students in the school must meet these vaccine requirements, no matter their age. Public PreK programs that work with a Head Start or child-care program must follow the child-care vaccine rules because those rules are stricter. Licensed private preschools must also follow the child-care vaccine rules.

3. What if a student received immunizations on a schedule that does not comply with the time and dose intervals set forth in Section 5 of the Rule?

If the student has received the correct amount of vaccine doses but has not met the requirements outlined in Section 5 of the Rule, including both the Immunization Standards and Schedule requirements, the student is not considered immunized and may not be permitted to enroll or attend school, unless they provide either laboratory evidence of immunity or an exception of a valid written assurance, medical exemption, or IEP exemption. The law permits medical exemptions when a Maine-licensed physician, nurse practitioner, or physician associate determines that immunization may be medically inadvisable.

4. Is there a required form for medical vaccination exemption?

No. There is a sample form on the website of the Maine Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (MAAP).

5. Can a medical exemption be provided by a naturopathic doctor (ND)?

No. Only licensed physicians, nurse practitioners or physician associates are authorized by law to provide the written medical exemption referenced in this rule.

6. Can a health provider from outside of Maine write the medical exemption?

The only way that a licensed physician, nurse practitioner, or physician associate from another state can write a medical exemption for a student in Maine is if they are also licensed to practice in the State of Maine at the time of the written exemption.

7. Does a child qualify for an Individual Education Plan (IEP) vaccination exemption to the law if they have an individual service plan (ISP)?

No. A child must have had an active IEP on or before 9/1/2021, in order to qualify for the IEP vaccination exemption at school.

8. Is there a required form for IEP vaccination exemption?

No, school administrative units may develop their own form or may document this exception using local procedures, but it must include a signed statement as required in 20-A M.R.S. § 6355(4)(A)-(B).

9. If a child moves into Maine with an active IEP from another state, do they qualify for the IEP exemption?

A child will qualify for the IEP exemption if the child had an active IEP on or before 9/1/2021, had a philosophical or religious exemption on that date and has provided a statement that they have consulted with a medical provider, as stated in 20-A M.R.S. §§ 6355(4)(A) or (B).

10. If a child was referred to special education prior to 9/1/2021 and was not found eligible or has not had an initial IEP meeting, do they qualify for the IEP exemption?

No. The child must have had an active IEP on 9/1/2021, in order to qualify for the exemption.

11. If a child was on an IEP but got dismissed in the 2020-21 school year, do they qualify for the exemption?

No. The child must have had an active IEP on 9/1/2021, in order to qualify for the exemption.

12. If the child is dismissed after 9/1/2021 and has the IEP vaccination exemption, will their exemption end upon dismissal?

No. The child will have access to the IEP vaccination exemption until they graduate, age out, withdraw or drop out of school. If the child re-registers for school after they drop out or have been withdrawn from school, the child will no longer have access to the IEP vaccination exemption and will have to comply with the vaccination law.

13. Can an individual, up to age 22 with an active IEP on or before 9/1/2021 access the IEP vaccination exemption?

Yes. Individuals ages 3-22 years with an active IEP in addition to having elected a philosophical or religious exemption that has been in place on or before 9/1/2021 will have access to the IEP vaccination exemption once the child enrolls in a school setting. IEP exemptions cannot be used in a child-care facility setting.

14. Can a parent file a religious or philosophical exemption for a child who has an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) through CDS before 9/1/21 for child care similar to those who have an IEP in schools?

No.

15. What is required from my health provider when using the IEP vaccination exemption?

The parent/guardian of the student (or the student if over 18) must provide a statement from a licensed physician, nurse practitioner or physician associate that the physician, nurse practitioner or physician associate has made that parent or guardian aware of the risks and benefits associated with the choice to immunize.

15. Does this rule apply to children who are home-schooled or attend school virtually?

For students who are solely home-schooled and do not take part in any school activities (sports, extracurricular, etc.), the law for school immunizations does not apply. If a home-schooled student participates in any extracurricular activities at a public school, the same immunization requirements pursuant to 20-A M.R.S. § 5021(2)(C) apply. Virtual schools grades PreK-12 are subject to the same immunization requirements.

16. Is the 90-day written assurance provided by the parent allowed for students who are continuing their enrollment within a school?

The written assurance is a one-time allowance for a student to catch up on missed or delayed vaccinations. It provides the school with an assurance that the child **will be immunized** by private effort within 90 days of enrollment or of the child first attending school, whichever date is the earliest, in accordance with 20-A M.R.S. § 6355(1).

A child on a catch-up schedule for childhood vaccines may attend school for the duration of a one-time 90-day written assurance exemption from the parent to get vaccinated or under a temporary medical exemption from a licensed physician, nurse practitioner or physician associate.

17. Are antibody titers acceptable for school entry?
In the absence of a certificate of immunization, the child must present the school with laboratory evidence demonstrating immunity or reliable documented history provided by a physician or other primary care provider for each individual disease which requires immunization. Titers should only be used for individuals who have received all required doses but cannot locate their immunization records. If a school has a student immunization record on file, it is not 'missing' or 'absent'. When a licensed healthcare provider with the authority to order laboratory tests provides such proof of immunity as the record, they are determining it is an appropriate use of titers.

18. How does vaccination compliance work for students attending under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Security Act?
McKinney-Vento students are not exempt from school immunization requirements; however, the McKinney-Vento Homeless Security Act requires a school to enroll a child experiencing homelessness, even if the child does not have immunization records or records evidencing a valid exception. If a child or youth experiencing homelessness is missing required immunization or other required health records, the enrolling school will immediately refer the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth to the local liaison, who will assist in obtaining necessary immunizations or screenings, or immunization or other required health records. 42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(3)(C)(iii).

School efforts should be made to eliminate barriers to attendance and retention of McKinney-Vento students, including assisting in care coordination of finding a primary care provider for students, as needed. In cases where access to care is not going to be timely, the Public Health Nursing team has offered to set up clinics at schools to assist in vaccinating students, as needed. Complete the form on the public health nursing website for assistance.

Schools should consult their legal counsel to ensure compliance with the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Security Act.

19. Which schools are required to report to the State of Maine through Docket?
All schools in the State of Maine are required to report immunization status of students to Maine CDC by using the method directed. These schools include any public or private elementary or secondary or special education facility providing instruction for any combination of pre-kindergarten through grade 12, including those schools with distance learning.

20. Special purpose private schools serve children who are dually enrolled in a sending district and in the SPPS. Do both of these schools report on immunization compliance through Docket?
Although the SPPS needs to ensure immunization compliance of all its students, it is the responsibility of the sending district to complete the report for all its students, including those placed out of district.

21. If a person has a history of Varicella (chicken pox) disease that provides assumed immunity, is it required to be documented by a physician, nurse practitioner, or physician associate licensed to practice in the State of Maine?

No. The documented history of Varicella (chicken pox) disease by a licensed physician may be submitted from any state, territory, or country.

22. Now that the State of Maine is using Docket for Schools, are schools required to maintain paper immunization records?

Records obtained through ImmPact may meet the "uniform-records" requirements set forth in 22 M.R.S. § 6357(1) and Section 7(B)(1) of the Immunization Requirements for School Children Rule. These records flow from ImmPact to Docket to populate a student's records; there is no need for a school to obtain duplicate records from a parent/guardian for this information. Only if the student was still missing required doses after Docket checks the ImmPact data, would separate records need to be obtained and kept on file by the school. They must meet the minimum requirements outlined in the rule, and the student's record should be updated in Docket to reflect that documentation was received, and the student's record is up to date.

For additional questions, please contact the Department of Education at DOESchoolandStudentSupports@maine.gov or the Maine Immunization Program at ImmunizeMe.DHHS@Maine.gov.