



REGIONAL SCHOOL UNIT 19

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Mr. Michael Hammer, Superintendent of Schools
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March 29, 2021

Dear Parent/Guardian,

RE: Immunization Requirements for the school year 2021-2022

This letter pertains to the new Maine State law regarding the change to the Exemption Status and the Required Immunizations for students enrolled in public schools. If your child is up to date with immunizations you are not affected by the new law.

This letter is being sent home to all families regardless of your child's immunization status. RSU#19 will be reinforcing the Maine State law governing immunized children at the beginning of the next school year.

Students enrolled in grades K-12: shall be immunized against diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, measles, mumps, rubella, polio and varicella.

Students enrolled in grades 7-12: shall be immunized against meningococcal meningitis and boosters of tetanus, diphtheria and acellular pertussis.

Beginning September 1st, 2021, children who are not immunized will not be able to register for and/or attend RSU#19 schools, unless they have a documented medical reason from a licensed Medical Doctor, Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine, Advanced Practice Clinician or a Family Nurse Practitioner. *Philosophical and Religious exemptions are no longer acceptable per the State of Maine.*

If you are unsure of the status of your child's immunizations, please contact your child's doctor or his/her school nurse for information. It can take several months to become fully immunized. We want your child to be able to attend the first day of school this fall!

A copy of the Law and RSU#19 board policy Code JLCB is enclosed.

Thank you for your cooperation and your attention to this letter.

Respectfully,

Mike Hammer
Superintendent of Schools, RSU#19

**HP0586
LD 798****Session - 129th Maine Legislature****LR 80
Item 1**

An Act To Protect Maine Children and Students from Preventable Diseases by Repealing Certain Exemptions from the Laws Governing Immunization Requirements

Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:

Sec. 1. 20-A MRSA §6355, sub-§3, as amended by PL 2001, c. 326, §2, is repealed.

Sec. 2. 20-A MRSA §6359, sub-§3, ¶B, as amended by PL 2001, c. 326, §6, is repealed.

Sec. 3. 22 MRSA §802, sub-§4-B, ¶B, as enacted by PL 2001, c. 185, §2, is repealed.

Sec. 4. 22 MRSA §8402, sub-§3, ¶A, as amended by PL 2001, c. 645, §10, is further amended to read:

A. The department shall adopt rules regarding the health of staff as required to protect the health and safety of the children. The rules must include a requirement that every 2 years each licensee, administrator or other staff member of the nursery school who provides care for children be declared free from communicable disease by a licensed physician ~~except that this requirement may be waived for a person who objects on the grounds of sincerely held religious or philosophical belief.~~ Rules adopted pursuant to this paragraph are routine technical rules as defined in Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter ~~H-A~~ 2-A.

Sec. 5. Rules. The Department of Education and the Department of Health and Human Services shall amend their rules to remove any rules exempting persons from immunization requirements because of their religious or philosophical beliefs. Rules adopted by the Department of Education must provide that a student who is covered by an individualized education plan on the effective date of this Act and has elected a philosophical or religious exemption from immunization requirements on or before the effective date of this Act may continue to attend school under that student's existing exemption as long as:

1. The parent or guardian of the student provides a statement from an appropriate medical professional that the medical professional has consulted with that parent or guardian and has made that parent or guardian aware of the risks and benefits associated with the choice to immunize; or

2. If the student is 18 years of age or older, the student provides a statement from an appropriate medical professional that the medical professional has consulted with that student and has made that student aware of the risks and benefits associated with the choice to immunize.

Rules adopted pursuant to this section are routine technical rules as defined in the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter 2-A.

SUMMARY

Current law allows exemptions from immunization requirements based on religious or philosophical beliefs for students in elementary and secondary schools and postsecondary schools and employees of nursery schools and health care facilities. This bill removes those exemptions. The bill also directs the Department of Education and the Department of Health and Human Services to remove any immunization exemptions based on religious or philosophical beliefs from their rules and requires the Department of Education to adopt rules allowing a student who is covered by an individualized education plan and has elected a philosophical or religious exemption from immunization requirements to continue to attend school under the existing exemption as long as an appropriate medical professional provides a statement that the medical professional has provided information on the risks and benefits associated with the choice to immunize.

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Disclaimer

IMMUNIZATION OF STUDENTS

All students who enroll in RSU 19 schools are required by Maine law to have the following immunizations (or a certificate of evidence of immunity or history of disease, or a signed exemption form on file):

- A. Grades K-12 - 4/5 doses of DTaP, $\frac{3}{4}$ doses of Polio, 2 doses of MMR, 1 dose of Varicella
- B. Grades 7-12 - 1 dose of Tdap
- C. Grades 7 – 11 - 1 dose of Meningococcal Conjugate (MCVA)
- D. Grade 12 - 2 doses of Meningococcal Conjugate (as long as the first does was given prior to the 16th birthday)

Non-immunized students shall not be permitted to attend school unless one of the following conditions are met:

- A. The student's parent/guardian provides to the school written assurance that the child will be immunized within 90 days of enrolling in school or his/her first attendance in classes, whichever date is earlier, or there is an established reasonable time schedule for immunizations. This option is available only once to each student during their school career; or
- B. The parent/guardian provides a physician's written statement each year that immunization against one or more diseases may be medically inadvisable (as defined by law/regulation).

The Superintendent shall exclude from school any non-immunized student when there is a clear danger to the health of others as provided by law.

The Superintendent/designee is directed to develop such administrative procedures as are necessary to carry out this policy and comply with statutory requirements.

Legal Reference: 20-A MRSA §§ 6352-6359
Chapter 126 (Me. Dept. of Ed. Rules) (May 10, 2018)

Cross Reference: JLCC – Communicable/Infectious Diseases
JRA – Student Educational Records