



Government of **Western Australia**
Department of **Health**

Strengthening immunisation reporting requirements

Frequently asked questions



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Frequently asked questions for persons in charge of child care services, kindergartens and schools

From 1 January 2019, new immunisation regulations under the *Public Health Act 2016 (WA)* will take effect which aim to increase immunisation coverage of children in Western Australia.

The regulations will help the Department of Health take steps to support families of under-vaccinated children and reduce the prevalence of vaccine preventable notifiable infectious diseases among West Australian children and the wider community.

What do the changes mean to persons in charge of child care services, kindergartens and schools?

Persons in charge of child care services, kindergartens and schools, or their delegates, are now legally obliged to share immunisation related data with the Department of Health's Chief Health Officer upon request.

Please see the *Guidelines for strengthening immunisation reporting requirements* for more information on the legal responsibilities of persons in charge of child care services, kindergartens and schools.

Why have these changes been made?

The changes have been made to increase immunisation rates for children in child care services, kindergartens and schools. In particular, they will:

- help the Chief Health Officer to provide appropriate support and referral pathways to parents/guardians of under-vaccinated children to enable better access to immunisation services
- provide increased powers to child care services, kindergartens and schools to contribute to help reduce the spread of vaccine preventable diseases
- help maintain a low incidence of vaccine preventable diseases within the community.

What other responsibilities do persons in charge of child care services, kindergartens and schools now have?

Persons in charge of child care services, kindergartens and schools can play an important part in providing a safe and healthy environment for all persons attending including children, their parents, other family members and staff.

Under the new legislation, persons in charge of child care services, kindergartens and schools may also be directed by the Department of Health's Chief Health Officer to:

- report an enrolled child who has, or is reasonably suspected to have contracted a vaccine preventable notifiable infectious disease
- not permit any child to attend the facility who does not have immunity against a vaccine preventable notifiable infectious disease
- close the whole or part of their facility in order to limit or prevent the spread of a vaccine preventable notifiable infectious disease.

Please see the *Guidelines for strengthening immunisation reporting requirements* for more information on the legal responsibilities of persons in charge of child care services, kindergartens and schools.

Which child care services, kindergartens and schools are required to report the immunisation status of children?

The Chief Health Officer may request the following types of services to report the immunisation status of enrolled children:

- long day care services
- family day care services
- kindergartens
- all schools.

If you are a person in charge of a service described above, please refer to the *Guidelines for strengthening immunisation reporting requirements* for more information.

What immunisation documentation must parents/guardians provide at enrolment?

Parents/ guardians must provide their child's Australian Immunisation Register (AIR) Immunisation History Statement at enrolment to child care services, kindergartens and schools.

The statement must be dated within two months prior to the date of application for enrolment. Parents are automatically sent an AIR Immunisation History Statement when their child turns 18 months of age and again at five years of age, or after their child has completed the four-year old vaccination schedule, whichever comes first. No other form of documentation is acceptable e.g. Purple Book, overseas immunisation records.

What new processes will be required for persons in charge of child care services, kindergartens and schools?

Persons in charge of child care services, kindergartens and schools are required to:

- take reasonable steps to collect each child's AIR Immunisation History Statement upon application for enrolment
- report the immunisation status of a child or children enrolled at the child care service, kindergarten or school to the Chief Health Officer, when requested by the Chief Health Officer
- report additional information of under-vaccinated children, when requested by the Chief Health Officer.

In the event the Chief Health Officer requests reports as above, the Department of Health will contact the person in charge via email and provide access to the *Reporting of an under-vaccinated child portal*.

For more information, see the *Guidelines for strengthening immunisation reporting requirements*.

Parent questions and responses have been prepared to support child care services, kindergartens and schools in administering the new regulations, see next page.

Frequently asked questions for parents

What do the changes mean to parents/guardians?

Parents have always been encouraged to share their child's Australian Immunisation Register (AIR) Immunisation History statement with their child care service, kindergarten and school upon enrolment or re-enrolment, and now they are now legally obliged to do so.

How do I access my child's AIR Immunisation History Statement?

You can access your child's AIR Immunisation History Statement at any time through:

- MyGov, by logging in to your Medicare online account
- Medicare Express Plus App, by logging in to the Medicare account
- Visiting a Medicare or Centrelink office
- Calling the AIR General Enquiries Line on 1800 653 809 for your statement to be posted.

If you do not hold a Medicare card you must call the AIR on 1800 653 809 to request an Immunisation History Statement.

You will automatically receive your child's AIR Immunisation History Statement in the mail after they complete their immunisation schedule (sometime after four years of age).

Translating and interpreting services are available on 131 450.

My child is 'up to date' with vaccinations. What do I need to do?

You are required to provide a copy of your child's AIR Immunisation History Statement on application for enrolment in child care, kindergarten or school.

My child is 'not up to date' with vaccinations. What do I need to do?

Child care services, kindergartens and schools may be required to report your child's immunisation status to the Chief Health Officer. Following this the Department of Health may contact you to discuss options for vaccination. If you intend to have your child immunised the Department will support you in accessing local immunisation clinics.

You may also consult your GP or local immunisation service, or visit: [Where can I get immunised?](#) (Healthy WA) to find a local immunisation clinic. Your GP or local government immunisation service will need to start giving immunisations that are overdue, and inform the AIR.

My child can't receive all the usual vaccines for medical reasons. What do I need to do?

Some children are unable to be immunised for medical reasons, such as having a severe allergy to vaccine ingredients or having a severely suppressed immune system. Natural immunity to a disease is also a valid exemption to vaccination.

If your child has a valid medical reason that they cannot be vaccinated, a GP (or other eligible health professional) needs to either:

- complete, sign and submit an [AIR Immunisation Medical Exemption Form](#) (external link), or
- provide notification directly in the child's online AIR record.

Following either step above, you will need to obtain an updated AIR Immunisation History Statement that indicates your child is 'up-to-date' with all the vaccines that they can have, lists the vaccines that they cannot have due to a medical contraindication, and/or states that they have a medical exemption from vaccination. This updated AIR Immunisation History Statement needs to be provided by you to the child care, kindergarten or school. During the event of an outbreak of a vaccine-preventable disease at the facility your child attends, and for your child's protection, your child may be excluded from attending for a specified period of time.

My child is catching up with immunisations. What do I need to do?

If your child is on an approved catch up schedule the immunisation provider needs to inform AIR, and either:

- complete and submit the AIR Immunisation History Form, or
- provide notification directly in your child's online AIR record.

Following either notification above, your child's AIR Immunisation History Statement will state the immunisation status as 'up to date'. This notification can only be recorded once per child and allows a limited grace period for the child to receive the required vaccinations for age.

On your child's enrolment, you will be required to provide the child care, kindergarten or school with a copy of the immunisation history statement for your child. During the event of an outbreak of a vaccine-preventable disease at the facility your child attends, and for your child's protection, your child may be excluded from attending the facility for a specified period of time.

My child has been fully vaccinated but their AIR Immunisation History Statement is not up to date. What do I need to do?

If you think your child's AIR data is incomplete or incorrect, contact your immunisation provider and ask them to correct the details on the AIR. Alternatively, you can seek advice by emailing immunisation@health.wa.gov.au

If a recent immunisation is missing from the statement, it may be that the statement was sent before the details were received from your immunisation provider. If the missing immunisations were given more than a month ago, contact your immunisation provider and ask them to update the information on the AIR.

If the name or date of birth details are incorrect on the AIR, call the Medicare general enquiries line on 132 011 and ask to have these updated.

My child was vaccinated overseas. What do I need to do?

Overseas immunisation records must not be accepted. In order to verify immunisation administered overseas, an Australian immunisation provider must update the child's immunisation record in the AIR. This may take up to a few weeks. Following the update to the child's AIR record, parents can then access an updated AIR Immunisation History Statement.

If translating services are required,

1. it is recommended that local immunisation providers contact their local [WA Public Health Unit](#) (HealthyWA) to organise these documents to be translated
2. or, overseas immunisation records can be sent to the [Department of Social Services](#) (external link) who provide a free document translating service for Australian citizens and immigrants.

Information for parents is available here: [Starting or moving schools – immunisation records](#) (HealthyWA)

How often do I need to provide my child's AIR Immunisation History Statement?

You need to provide your child's AIR Immunisation History Statement each time a child enrolls in a child care service, kindergarten or school. There may also be other situations where immunisation records are required to limit or prevent the spread of a vaccine preventable disease.

Do I still have a choice to vaccinate my child?

Yes. Vaccination is not compulsory and you will continue to have the choice whether or not to vaccinate your child. If you have decided not to vaccinate your child, you still need to provide your AIR Immunisation Statement on enrolment at a child care service, kindergarten or school.

Governments have a responsibility to make decisions that balance the best possible community health outcomes with individual choices.

The purpose of these changes is to increase immunisation rates in the community, particularly amongst young children, and through effective follow up of under vaccinated children. This is a public health priority, given the serious risk posed by vaccine preventable diseases and the proven safety and efficacy of vaccines.

Who can I contact for more information?

More information about the new requirements is available by contacting:
immunisation@health.wa.gov.au

Further information can also be found at the following links:

- [Where can I get immunised?](#) (HealthyWA)
- [Australian Immunisation Register](#), (external link) to get your child's vaccination history statement
- [Department of human services](#) contacts (external link)
- [Immunisation information for parents](#) (HealthyWA)
- [WA Childhood Immunisation Schedule](#) (HealthyWA)
- [The Science of Immunisation](#) (external link)
- [A to Z Infectious Diseases](#) (internal link)
- [Possible side effects of vaccination](#) (HealthyWA)

This document can be made available in alternative formats on request for a person with disability.

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