



STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN RESOURCES
BUREAU FOR PUBLIC HEALTH

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Karen L. Bowling
Cabinet Secretary

MEMORANDUM

DATE: June 10, 2015

TO: Local Health Officers
Local Health Departments
Vaccines for Children (VFC) Providers
State Medical Association
West Virginia Department of Education
Local Boards of Education
School Nurses and Attendance Directors

FROM: Rahul Gupta, MD, MPH, FACP
Commissioner and State Health Officer

RE: CHANGES TO THE MEDICAL EXEMPTION PROCESS

Effective June 16, 2015, the process for parents and physicians to request an exemption from compulsory immunization requirements for school entry and the process by which medical exemption requests are reviewed and evaluated will change significantly. These changes are required by legislation passed in March 2015 and are expected to make the medical exemption process more transparent, timely, responsive to parents, and consistent in its application.

Senate Bill 286, enacted on March 18, 2015, makes the medical exemption process more consistent by moving the medical exemption review process from the local health departments to the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources, Bureau for Public Health, where an Immunization Officer (licensed physician) will make determinations on each request for medical exemptions. Parties adversely affected by a decision of the Immunization Officer will have the right to appeal the Immunization Officer's decision to the State Health Officer.

A Request for Medical Exemption from Compulsory Immunization may be initiated on behalf of a child by either his or her legal guardian or a licensed physician who has treated or examined the child. A parent who wishes to initiate a medical exemption request may download, complete and submit the request form to a physician who has treated or examined the child. The physician will then submit the request form to the Bureau for Public Health with supporting medical documentation to validate the request. The form can be downloaded at http://www.dhhr.wv.gov/oeps/immunization/Documents/Medical%20Exemptions/FINAL_Template_for_FILLABLE_Parents-MEDICAL_EXEMPTION-APPROVED_6-17-15.pdf or requested by telephone at 1-800-642-3634 or (304) 558-2188.

Physicians may initiate the request by completing and submitting the required documentation found in the Medical Exemption Module of the West Virginia Statewide Immunization Information System (WVSIIS), also known as the Immunization Registry. Alternatively, a physician may download the *Request for Medical Exemption from Compulsory Immunization* form located on the website at http://www.dhhr.wv.gov/oeps/immunization/Documents/Medical%20Exemptions/WV_Med_Exempt_Request_FILLABLE_Form%20_11.20.13.pdf and submit the completed typed form to the Bureau for Public Health at the address provided on the form. **Handwritten forms will not be accepted.**

Additional information concerning the medical exemption process is located on the West Virginia Division of Immunization Services' (DIS) website at <http://www.dhhr.wv.gov/oeps/immunization/requirements/Pages/Medical-Exemption-Resource-Center.aspx>.

Local health department staff, school nurses and other school officials, who receive requests for medical exemptions from either a guardian or physician, can use their access (or that of their appropriate designee) to WVSIIS to verify the medical exemption has been submitted and is in-process, submitted and approved, submitted and denied, or not submitted. If it is determined the medical exemption request is not yet documented in WVSIIS at any stage, the person receiving the request for medical exemption must inform the applicant of the process using the information and links provided in this memorandum.

Thank you for your efforts to ensure the new process for requesting, reviewing and documenting medical exemption requests will meet with satisfaction of all interested parties. Please direct any questions or concerns about medical exemptions to Jeff Neccuzi, Director, Division of Immunization Services via email at jeffrey.i.neccuzi@wv.gov or by telephone at 1-800-642-3634 or (304) 558-2188.