

## Operational Policies and Procedures

### Immunisation

Under the legislation “No Jab, No Play”, from 1 January 2016 all children will be required to be fully vaccinated for their age. This law applies to all early childhood education and care services in Victoria providing:

- Long day care
- Kindergarten
- Family day care
- Occasional care

Before a child can be enrolled, and commence attending, the early childhood services will have to first obtain evidence from the parent that the child is:

- Fully immunised for their age OR
- On a vaccination catch up program OR
- Unable to be fully immunised for medical reasons.

“Conscientious objection” is no longer an exemption under the new legislation.

Under Federal legislation, parents who do not fully immunise their children (up to 19 years of age) will cease to be eligible for Child Care Benefit, Child Care Rebate and the Family Tax Benefit Part A end of year supplement (family assistance payments) and the Kindergarten Funding Subsidy.

Children with medical contraindications for certain diseases will continue to be exempt from the requirements with the appropriate proof provided.

Through the ECMS monthly ‘Engage’ newsletters, regular communication will strongly encourage parents to vaccinate their children, as required by law.

### Roles & Responsibilities

General Managers	Accountable for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring implementation</li> </ul>
Area Managers	Responsible for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring and supporting implementation in the services they manage</li> <li>•</li> </ul>
Centre Directors & Nominated Supervisors	Responsible for:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring acceptable certificates are up to date and stored with the child's enrolment form</li> <li>• Refer parents to local council immunisation services. (see example attached 5)</li> <li>•</li> <li>• Monitoring the currency of immunisation status for children in the services they manage</li> </ul>
Educators	Responsible for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supporting the implementation of this policy and procedure</li> </ul>
Parents/Guardians	Responsible for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing a current Immunisation History certificate</li> <li>• Providing the centre with updated Immunisation History certificate after any new immunisations</li> </ul>
Communications and Marketing	Responsible for: <p>Monthly parent communications via the ECMS 'Engage' newsletters</p>

## Procedure

On enrolment the nominated supervisor or responsible person will:

- request, assess, and retain an immunisation history certificate for each child (kept with the enrolment record)
- refer parents to local council immunisation services if immunisations are not current
- support the family by working through the process outlined in the Immunisation Enrolment Toolkit (<https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/about/publications/policiesandguidelines/immunisation-enrolment-toolkit>) and advise parents that they are required to notify the centre of any new or additional immunisations a child is given. This is to ensure centre records are kept up to date.

Only enrol those children who provide acceptable immunisation status documentation or who qualify for the "grace period" (refer to Immunisation Enrolment

Toolkit) <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/about/publications/policiesandguidelines/immunisation-enrolment-toolkit>

## Acceptable certificates

The following are the only acceptable certificates for immunisation:

1. Australian Childhood Immunisation Register (ACIR) Immunisation History Certificate
2. Document/s signed by a General Practitioner or Immunisation Nurse, that contains the same information as an Immunisation Status Certificate.

Where a child does not have one of the two required certificates, named above Nominated Supervisors or responsible person will:

- a. Determine if the child meets the criteria for vulnerability. See section below on Vulnerable Children If so, complete the grace period eligibility assessment form with the family and refer the family to apply for an Immunisation History Certificate – catch up schedule.

## Vulnerable Children

Under the No Jab, No Play law, vulnerable children will be eligible to enrol into services under a grace period (16 weeks) without providing proof of immunisation. This allows the child to attend services, whilst the parent seeks information and assistance to get their child's immunisations up to date.

During the 16 week grace period, which commences on the first day of the child's attendance at the service, the service is required to take "reasonable steps to obtain the required immunisation documentation".

The Department of Health and Human Services defines vulnerable children as:

- Children evacuated from their place of residence due to an emergency such as a flood or bushfire
- Children in emergency care within the meaning of section 3(1) of the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005
- Children in the care of an adult who is not their parent due to exceptional circumstances such as illness or incapacity
- Children identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
- Children whose parents hold a health care card, pensioner concession card, a veterans Affairs Gold or White card
- Children who are considered refugees and asylum seekers
- Children known to child protection
- Children referred to Child FIRST
- Other circumstances as made by the Secretary to the Department of health and Human Services

## Medical exemptions

Some children may be exempt from the requirement to be fully vaccinated on medical grounds. The Department of Education and Training (DET) outlines these reasons as:

- Where the child has experienced an anaphylactic reaction to a previous dose of a particular vaccine or
  - An anaphylactic reaction to any vaccine component
  - Has a disease which lowers immunity or
  - Is having treatment which lowers immunity
1. Parents will be required to consult their GP where they believe their child may require a medical exemption. Where this is the case the GP must complete and sign a Medicare Immunisation Exemption – Medical Contraindication Form (see example attached 4) and send this to the Australian Childhood Immunisation Register.
  2. The parents must then obtain an updated Immunisation History Statement from the Australian Childhood Immunisation Register and then provide the Immunisation History Statement to the service.

## Supporting families to comply

Where a child's vaccinations are not up-to-date, Nominated Supervisors or the responsible person will advise families to contact their General Practitioner or Immunisation Nurse to arrange a vaccination catch up schedule. *The immunisation provider can provide documentation about the catch up schedule that the parent must provide to the service.*

**Nominated supervisors and the responsible person can provide families with the Immunisation Status certificate checklist (see example attached 5)**

For children who were vaccinated overseas, parents will consult their General Practitioner or Immunisation Nurse, who will transfer the information to the Australian Childhood Immunisation Register. Once these vaccinations have been confirmed, the Australian Childhood Immunisation Register can issue an Immunisation History Statement to the parents, who will in turn provide this Statement to the service.

In line with the law children will not be enrolled in an ECMS service who have not demonstrated, through acceptable documentation, they are immunised, on a catch up schedule, have a medical exemption, or vulnerable.

## Staff

ECMS recommends that all staff are immunised against those infectious diseases that are stated on the National Immunisation Schedule. The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) provides best practice advice based on The Australian Immunisation Handbook regarding immunisation of staff who work with young children. This advice recommends the following vaccinations that services may consider for staff members:

- Whooping cough (pertussis)
- Measles, mumps, rubella (MMR)
- Chickenpox (varicella)
- Hepatitis A & Hepatitis B
- Seasonal Influenza

If a staff member has not been immunised in accordance with the National Immunisation Schedule, he/she will be excluded from the children's service upon an outbreak of any of these for the recommended minimum period of exclusion.

Policy Created Date	July 2014, Reviewed September 2015, Reviewed July 2016, Reviewed October 2016
Policy Review Date	September 2018
Sources and Further Reading	Education and Care Services National Regulations 2012 Reg-88,168 Department of Human Services Minimum Period of Exclusion Booklet Public Health Amendment (No Jab, No Play) Act 2015 <a href="#">No Jab, No Play toolkit</a> <a href="#">No Jab, No Play templates</a> ECMS, Operations Policy and Procedure 2.6 Dealing with infectious diseases <a href="#">Exclusion table, Health Victoria</a>
Related to NQS Q.A	2.1.1 and 2.1.4