

Immunisation requirements for children enrolling in Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten

From **22 July 2019** children may only be enrolled in Pre-Kindergarten or Kindergarten if they have an up to date immunisation history statement or are exempt. Schools are not to enrol any new Pre-Kindergarten or Kindergarten students who cannot satisfy this requirement.

These new rules have been brought in by amendments to the *Public Health Act 2016*, *Public Health Regulations 2017* and *School Education Act 1999*. They include:

- To enrol a child in pre-compulsory education (Pre-K and K), parents/carers must supply an Australian Immunisation Register (AIR) history statement showing a status of 'up to date' and dated within two months before enrolment (or six months if the child is on a catch up schedule).
- If the parents/carers cannot supply this statement, or they supply one showing the child's immunisations are not up to date, they may apply for an exemption for their child.
- Without an up to date immunisation history or an exemption, children can no longer be enrolled in Pre-K or K.
- Currently enrolled Pre-K and K students, who remain at the same school are not affected.

This change does not affect children in the compulsory education period (that is, in Pre-Primary and above) although it is still required that schools obtain their immunisation history statement on (new) enrolment and record the information (whether up to date or not up to date) on the enrolment register. For information on this requirement - which was introduced in January 2019 - see: https://healthywa.wa.gov.au/Articles/S_T/Starting-or-moving-schools-immunisation-records

When is "enrolment"?

Enrolment is not defined in the legislation. The Department of Education considers that enrolment occurs when it is finalised according to each school's existing policy.

Who decides if a child is exempt?

This is the responsibility of the Principal. The Department of Health has published a form for schools to use for this purpose: 'Exemption Eligibility Form (family circumstances)' at https://ww2.health.wa.gov.au/Articles/F_I/Immunisation-enrolment.

If the Principal determines a child is exempt, the child can be enrolled. The exemption type must be recorded along with the immunisation status of 'not up to date'. Once enrolled, the Department of Health will follow up with families where children are 'not up to date' to

support them in accessing local immunisation services to bring them up to date. If not exempt or up to date, the child cannot be enrolled.

What are the exemption categories?

Parents/carers may apply for an exemption because of family circumstances if the child:

- is an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
- is in the care of the CEO of the Department of Communities
- is living in crisis or emergency accommodation because of family violence or a risk of family violence or homelessness
- has been evacuated from their ordinary place of residence because it is in an area of the State to which a declaration made under section 56 of the *Emergency Management Act 2005* applies
- is in the care of an adult, other than the child's parent or guardian, because of exceptional circumstances
- is in the care of a responsible person who holds a valid:
 - health care card
 - pensioner concession card
 - Veterans' Affairs white card
 - Veterans' Affairs gold card
- first entered Australia not more than 6 months before the time of enrolment and holds, or parent holds, one of the following visa subclasses: 200, 201, 202, 203, 204, 785, 790, or 866.

Is this legislation relevant to the school's registration?

Compliance is relevant to registration for non-government schools. Registration Standard 8.1 requires non-government school enrolment and attendance procedures and practices to comply with all legal requirements.

Further information

The Department of Health website has further information designed specifically for schools:
https://ww2.health.wa.gov.au/Articles/F_I/Immunisation-enrolment

Regards,

Meredith Wilkie
A/Director Education Regulation
Non-Government School Regulation

Department of Education
A: Level 9, 20 Walters Drive, Osborne Park WA 6017
T: (08) 9441 1900
F: (08) 9441 1901
E: NGSRegulation@education.wa.edu.au
W: www.education.wa.edu.au