

# STATE OF CONNECTICUT

## DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Manisha Juthani, MD  
Commissioner



Ned Lamont  
Governor  
Susan Bysiewicz  
Lt. Governor

August 3, 2023

Dear School Superintendents, Medical Advisors, School Nurses, and School Administrators:

As we are recovering from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have recent first-hand experience in the ways an infectious disease can impact student education. Immunizations are critical in protecting students from vaccine preventable diseases and minimizing the impacts of these illnesses. The purpose of this letter is to underscore the need for all students to be up to date on their immunizations when school starts in the fall of 2023 and to assist you in addressing students who are behind at the start of school by resharing the guidance documents distributed in a [Department of Public Health \(DPH\) memo](#) dated February 16, 2023. This letter also provides updates for this school year related to COVID-19 and viral respiratory disease reporting and prevention.

### In Process Vaccination of Students

Connecticut immunization school entry requirements require that students whose initial immunizations have been given but additional required immunizations are in process are to submit the [Healthcare Provider's Certification of In Process Required School Immunizations](#) completed by the student's physician, physician assistant (PA) or advance practice registered nurse (APRN), stating that the additional immunizations are in process in accord with guidelines and schedule specified by the Commissioner of Public Health ([Connecticut Department of Public Health Schedule For In Process Required School Immunizations](#)). Physicians, PAs, and APRNs must follow the CDC catch up schedule following the minimum spacing interval between doses and complete the administration of the additional required immunizations no later than 30-days after the minimal interval time period has occurred.

For a limited subset of students, where the provider has clinical grounds for departing from the Department of Public Health Guidelines, the provider may submit a declaration titled the [Healthcare Provider's Declaration of In Process Required School Immunizations for PreK or Preschool Students Subject to Religious Exemption Prior to April 28, 2021](#). The declaration is to be used only for a student who **prior to April 28, 2021**, was both (1) enrolled in a preschool program or other prekindergarten program and (2) exempt from the program's immunization requirements based on a statement submitted to the program that such immunization requirements would be contrary to the religious beliefs of the student or the parents or guardian of the student. The provider must confirm that the student meets these two requirements by receiving a copy of the student's religious exemption



Phone: (860) 509-7929 • Fax: (860) 706-5429  
Telecommunications Relay Service 7-1-1  
410 Capitol Avenue, P.O. Box 340308  
Hartford, Connecticut 06134-0308  
<https://portal.ct.gov/dph>

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statement from the preschool program or other prekindergarten program dated prior to April 28, 2021. The declaration form, most current immunization record, and a detailed catch-up schedule of remaining vaccinations should be shared with the school the student attends. If the student does not meet these requirements, then the healthcare provider must complete the [certificate](#). The Connecticut State Department of Education updated the [Frequently Asked Questions](#) regarding the implementation of Public Act 21-6 on April 4<sup>th</sup> 2023. Resources are also available on the [DPH Immunization Program's website](#).

This fall, it is especially important that students and staff receive flu vaccine since we expect influenza and COVID-19 will be circulating simultaneously. Influenza vaccine is one of the greatest tools we have at our disposal to minimize the impact of this threat and reduce the burden of respiratory illness during the upcoming influenza season. We anticipate that an updated COVID-19 vaccine will also be available this fall, but we are awaiting guidance on which groups will be eligible to receive it. Members of your staff who are aged 60 or older will also be eligible for the Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) vaccine and should discuss whether to receive it with a healthcare provider. Optimizing immunity to respiratory viral diseases this fall will be the best way to ensure healthy communities in our schools, minimize disrupted education, and maintain high levels of school attendance.

Maintaining vaccine confidence and addressing parental concerns about vaccines is essential. If parents and/or caregivers express concerns about vaccines and/or vaccine safety, resources are available at the end of this letter that may be helpful in these conversations. Parents or caregivers of students who need immunizations should contact their primary care physician, community health center, local health department, or school-based health center to schedule a visit and discuss any concerns they may have with their healthcare providers.

### **Viral Respiratory Disease Reporting and Prevention**

In keeping with prior communications from the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) and DPH, school districts are reminded that previously operative executive orders and binding State guidance pertaining to COVID-19 have expired or are no longer in effect. As such, school districts are encouraged to follow CDC guidance as they develop and update their own policies regarding quarantine, isolation, and masking for COVID-19 at this time. DPH recommends that, as with any illness, students and staff should be encouraged to stay home if they are exhibiting symptoms of an illness. Updated quarantine, isolation, and masking guidance from CDC can be found here: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k-12-childcare-guidance.html>. DPH recommends that schools consider this guidance in the context of the needs of their school communities when developing and revisiting district policies.

During the 2023–24 school year, schools are no longer required to submit reports of individual cases of COVID-19 among staff or students to the school submission portal. DPH and CSDE sincerely appreciate the efforts throughout the pandemic to report these data. Going forward, any suspected or confirmed outbreak in a school setting, including outbreaks of COVID-19 and other viral respiratory diseases, is immediately reportable by telephone to both DPH and the local health department where the school is located. Schools should continue to work closely with local public health to identify and investigate suspected outbreaks and implement mitigation strategies to limit disease transmission.

[https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DPH/EEIP/Reportable-Disease-Forms/PD23\\_2023-12\\_27\\_2022-Final-Fillable-Form.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DPH/EEIP/Reportable-Disease-Forms/PD23_2023-12_27_2022-Final-Fillable-Form.pdf).

Thank you for all the hard work you do to educate our students and your continued partnership to ensure their good health and safety. If you have questions, you may contact the DPH Immunization Program at (860) 509-7929 or at [dph.immunizations@ct.gov](mailto:dph.immunizations@ct.gov), the DPH Epidemiology Program at (860) 509-7994 or [dph.eeip@ct.gov](mailto:dph.eeip@ct.gov), or CSDE's contact Chlo-Anne Bobrowski at [chlo-anne.bobrowski@ct.gov](mailto:chlo-anne.bobrowski@ct.gov).

Sincerely,



Manisha Juthani, MD  
Commissioner  
Connecticut Department of Public Health



Charlene M. Russell-Tucker  
Commissioner  
Connecticut Department of Education

- [Resources for Encouraging Routine Childhood Vaccinations](#) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- [Immunizations](#) National Association of School Nurses
- [#CallYourPediatrician Campaign](#) and the [Immunizations Campaign Toolkit](#) American Academy of Pediatrics
- [https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/School-Nursing/Publications/Immunization\\_Requirements.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/School-Nursing/Publications/Immunization_Requirements.pdf)