

Advisory Committee on Medical Exemptions
Virtual Meeting November 3, 2022

Attendees:

Jody Terranova, D.O.; Chair, Pediatrician UConn School of Medicine
Kathy Kudish, DVM; Department of Public Health Immunization Program Manager
Ricky Baltimore; Chief Legal Counsel State Democrats
Susan Amster, P.A.; Physician Assistant Willows Pediatrics
Keisha Hewitt; Nurse Consultant State of Connecticut Office of Early Childhood
Chlo-Anne Bobrowski; State of Connecticut Department of Education Division of School Health
Lori Flaherty; Supervisor of Non-Public School Nurses West Hartford
Inci Yildirim M.D.; Yale School of Medicine
Henry Salton; Department of Public Health Legal Counsel

Meeting was called to order at 10:02 AM by Dr. Terranova.

Dr. Terranova began the meeting by asking for an update of the DPH/SDE workgroup tasked to provide guidance to school nurses for unvaccinated and under-vaccinated students.

Mick Bolduc from DPH shared with the group that two documents are close to being finalized that will provide clarity for school nurses: the first will be for students who are not grandfathered in under Public Act 21-6 and present to school with an “alternative vaccine schedule”; and the second will be for those older students in who are in progress with their vaccines and are following the CDC catch-up schedule. Henry Salton from DPH’s legal office has been helping to craft the two documents which are nearly finalized. The first document is for those students who prior to April 28, 2021 were enrolled in a pre-school or pre-k program and had a religious exemption. The physician, P.A. or A.P.R.N. will need to complete and sign the declaration form stating that based on their clinical judgement they are administering vaccines on an alternative schedule different than the CDC catch-up schedule approved by the Commissioner of Public Health. The second document the physician, P.A. or A.P.R.N. will complete for a student following the CDC catch-up schedule approved by the Commissioner of Public Health with the minimum spacing between vaccine doses with a 30-day grace period. Once finalized, Kathy will send these forms out with a cover letter explaining the process to physicians statewide as well as to school nursing supervisors.

Chlo-Anne mentioned several instances of out of state medical exemptions being filed. Henry provided guidance on how to handle these types of situations. Lori received feedback that school nurses have not seen an increase in the filing of medical exemptions so far this year but there does seem to be occurrences of parents who are “shopping” for a provider willing to sign the medical exemption certificate for their child. Lori added that school nurses are receiving a lot of support from school administrators thus far in enforcing school immunization requirements and that the medical exemption certificates are being completed and submitted to the school nurses as required.

Dr. Terranova asked how school nurses will be educated on the two new forms that are being developed by DPH? Kathy replied that there will be several different means to educate the school nurses including at the upcoming school nurse supervisor conference at the end of November as well as being posted in the state Department of Education newsletter. Dr. Terranova requested that the forms be shared with the committee members when they become available to the public.

Dr. Terranova also asked for an update on the DPH regulations concerning the collection of medical exemption forms. DPH can legally collect this information and a portal has been created to capture this information. Kathy will include this information in the same letter that will be sent to physicians and school nurse supervisors with the guidance documents on the unvaccinated/under-vaccinated students.

Chlo-Anne asked if medical exemption certificates need to be updated? Kathy responded that depends on the type of medical exemption: a permanent medical exemption does not need to be updated but a temporary medical exemption does need to be updated.

Kathy mentioned that the annual school survey has just been sent out by DPH. At our spring meeting we should have some information available for the committee from the medical exemption portal.

Lori asked about the vaccine requirements for daycare/pre-k within school settings. Keisha responded that flu is required up through 59 months of age and that all other vaccines are the same as school requirements. Chlo-Anne asked who do school nurses contact if they did not receive the school survey and Kathy responded that those individuals should contact the state Immunization Program.

The meeting adjourned at 10:37 AM

The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for May 4, 2023.

Minutes submitted by Mick Bolduc Connecticut Immunization Program