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June 24, 2016

To: School Superintendents, Principals and Child Care Center Directors
CC: School Nurses
Re: Medical Exemption Pilot Project

This letter supersedes and replaces the June 6, 2016 Medical Exemption Pilot Project (MEPP) letter. We regret any confusion caused by our earlier letter of June 6, 2016.

MEPP is being implemented by the Santa Barbara County Public Health Department to help schools comply with statutory amendments within Senate Bill 277 (SB 277). SB 277 became effective January 1, 2016, and eliminates the personal belief exemption for school children immunizations, but still allows for medical exemptions. (Cal. Health & Safety Code §§ 120325(c); 120370(a).)

As discussed below, MEPP provides procedural support to schools and child care centers, but does not “overturn” medical exemptions issued by a licensed physician. Since the State of California has not provided a standardized form for medical exemptions from immunization, the Public Health Department will provide procedural support to school officials or issuing physicians, concerning medical exemption documentation. Our review will be limited to the five requirements shown on Page 2 of this letter. Determining if a “physical condition” or “medical circumstance” warrants exemption from vaccination is not part of this review. Pursuant to Health and Safety Code Section 120325, the Public Health Department also ascertains the immunization needs of groups of children in schools and other institutions.

Direction. For all medical exemptions from immunization, beginning with the 2016-2017 school year, the Public Health Department directs all schools and child care centers to:

- Transmit by facsimile to the Public Health Department’s Immunization Program, at (805) 346-7232, all medical exemptions from immunization, both permanent and temporary;
- After first redacting from each medical exemption the student’s “Personally Identifiable Information,” which is defined at 34 CFR § 99.3 in the regulations implementing the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), and also shown at Enclosure (1) to this letter.

The above direction is made pursuant to Health and Safety Code Section 120375(c).

Background. California Health and Safety Code, Section 120370(a) provides that a parent or guardian may file a medical exemption to exempt a child from required immunizations. A medical exemption is “a written statement by a licensed physician to the effect that the physical condition of the child is such, or medical circumstances relating to the child are such, that immunization is not considered safe, indicating the specific nature and probable duration of the medical condition or circumstances, including, but not limited to, family medical history, for which the physician does not recommend immunization.” That child shall then be exempt from immunization requirements, to the extent indicated by the physician’s statement. (Cal. Health & Safety Code § 120370(a).)

As interpreted by the California Department of Public Health and the California Department of Education, the written statement filed by a parent or guardian must:

1. Be issued by a Doctor of Medicine (M.D.) or Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine (D.O.);
2. State that the physical condition or medical circumstances of the child are such that the required immunization(s) is not considered safe;
3. State which vaccines are being exempted;
4. State whether the medical exemption is permanent or temporary; and
5. State the expiration date, if the exemption is temporary.

More information about these requirements is available at Frequently Asked Question #13 on the California Department of Public Health’s website:

<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/immunize/Documents/SB277FAQs%20-%20080515.pdf>

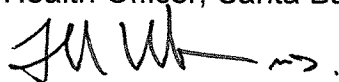
We look forward to partnering with schools and childcare centers as we move forward with the Medical Exemption Pilot Project.

Please contact the Immunization Program at (805) 346-8420 if you have questions.

Sincerely,



Charity Dean MD, MPH
Health Officer, Santa Barbara County Public Health Dept.



Takashi Wada MD, MPH
Director, Santa Barbara County Public Health Dept.

Enclosure: (1) “Personally Identifiable Information” summary from 34 CFR § 99.3

“Personally Identifiable Information”

Under the regulations implementing the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), “Personally Identifiable Information” includes:

- The student’s name;
- The name of the student’s parent or other family members;
- The address of the student or student’s family;
- A personal identifier, such as the student’s social security number, student number, or biometric record;
- Other indirect identifiers, such as the student's date of birth, place of birth, and mother's maiden name;
- Other information that, alone or in combination, is linked or linkable to a specific student that would allow a reasonable person in the school community, who does not have personal knowledge of the relevant circumstances, to identify the student with reasonable certainty; or
- Information requested by a person who the educational agency or institution reasonably believes knows the identity of the student to whom the education record relates.

ENCLOSURE (1)