

Immunization Requirements for Homeless and Foster Children

[Immunization Laws in Minnesota](http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/immunize/laws/index.html)

(<http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/immunize/laws/index.html>) require children enrolling in child care, early childhood programs, or school to show that they have received certain immunizations or are exempt from the requirements. However, federal policies override our state law for children in special living situations. This includes children who are:

- Homeless
- In foster care
- Waiting to be placed in foster care

These children are allowed to enroll without showing immunization records.

How is homelessness defined?

For either child care or school, a child is “homeless” if any of the following is true:¹

- The child’s family shares housing with others because of economic hardship.
- The child lives in a motel, hotel, trailer park, or campground due to the lack of an adequate housing alternative.
- The child lives in an emergency or transitional shelter.
- The child is waiting to be placed into foster care.
- The child’s primary nighttime residence is not meant for sleeping, including a car, a public place, or unsafe housing.

A child who has left his or her family can be considered homeless even if the family has a home and would allow the child to return.

How is foster care defined?

A foster child is one who has been placed in a foster care setting that is either licensed or an unlicensed emergency relative placement under Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 245A.

What is needed for child care?

Children in special living situations have 30 days after enrollment to show that they meet the immunization requirements, or are exempt from the immunization requirements.

Licensed child care providers and child care programs that receive payments through the Child Care Assistance Program must follow this policy. This includes family child care programs and child care centers licensed under Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 245A and all child care providers registered under 119B (Child Care Assistance Program) including legally nonlicensed child care providers and license exempt centers.

Child care providers should document in the child’s file if the immunization records were not provided at enrollment due to the child’s special living situation as well as the date the child started attending care to verify that the records will be/were obtained within the 30 day period.

What is needed for school?

Students who are in these living situations at any time during the school year are allowed to stay for the rest of the year without immunization records, even if their living situations change. School staff must try to get

immunization records from a student’s previous school(s). State law allows schools to share immunization records with their former students’ new schools.

Public schools, including public preschool programs and public charter schools, must follow this policy. Neither private schools nor private preschools are required to follow this policy.

How do I include homeless or foster children in reports to MDH?

If records are not available, child care centers should include these children in the “No Doses” category of their reporting forms. Schools should include them in the “In Progress/Missing Doses” category of the Annual Immunization Status Report.

In the future, MDH plans to add categories to both forms to count these children separately.

Where can I look for immunization records?

Immunization information systems (IISs) combine vaccines a person gets in different places into one electronic record. The Minnesota Immunization Information Connection (MIIC) is Minnesota’s IIS. Visit [MIIC and Schools](http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/immunize/registry/schools.html) (www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/immunize/registry/schools.html) or [MIIC and Child Care Centers \(DHS Rule 3\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/immunize/registry/ccbasics.html) (www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/immunize/registry/ccbasics.html) to learn about using MIIC to access immunization records. See [Looking for Immunization Records?](#)

¹ These descriptions come from the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, which provides the official definition of homelessness for both child care and school. On December 10, 2016, per the Every Student Succeeds Act, children waiting to be placed in foster care will be

(www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/immunize/registry/immrecords.html) for other tips on how to find records.

Where can I get free or low-cost shots?

Children 18 years and younger who are American Indian or Alaska Native, uninsured, or enrolled in a Minnesota Health Care Program can receive free or low-cost shots from the Minnesota Vaccines for Children Program. Most local public health clinics and pediatric providers participate in this program. The vaccine is free. Clinics may charge a fee for giving the vaccine, but they cannot turn away patients if they can’t afford to pay the fee. Some clinics may also charge for the office visit.

Where can I get more information?

Child care: If licensed, contact your licenser, or if not, contact your Child Care Assistance Program agency.

Schools: Contact your district’s McKinney-Vento liaison or school nurse.

Minnesota Department of Health
 Immunization Program
 PO Box 64975
 St. Paul, MN 55164-0975
 651-201-5503 or 1-800-657-3970
www.health.state.mn.us/immunize

To obtain this information in a different format, call: 651-201-5503. Printed on recycled paper.

removed from the McKinney-Vento definition of homelessness because they will instead be protected by the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act. They will still be entitled to enroll without immunization records.