

Vaccination requirements to attend school.

Information for school principals



**Public Health
Santé publique**
SUDBURY & DISTRICTS

What is the *Immunization of School Pupils Act*?

The *Immunization of School Pupils Act R.S.O. 1990* (ISPA) is the Ontario law that requires students to have up to date vaccinations (or a valid statement of exemption for medical reasons, reasons of conscience, or religious beliefs) in order to attend school. Under ISPA legislation, students can be suspended from school if they do not have required vaccinations (diphtheria, polio, tetanus, measles, mumps, rubella, meningococcal disease, and pertussis). Children born after January 1, 2010, are also required to have vaccination against varicella (chicken pox).

1. In compliance with the ISPA, the original Order for Suspension will be mailed to the school principal as the “school operator”. This order requires the school operator to suspend the student on a specific date. A copy of this order will be mailed to the parent or legal guardian.
2. Parents and guardians of students who are not up to date with the required immunizations, will receive up to two letters from Public Health Sudbury & Districts in advance of the suspension date. A copy of this letter can be found within this correspondence package.
3. An outline of school responsibilities for implementing ISPA student suspension has been added to this information sheet.

What’s new for the 2023-2024 school year?

ISPA enforcement will include both in class and virtual learners. All students who are enrolled in school are required to be in compliance with ISPA.

In class learners will be subject to suspension if their immunization records are incomplete. Virtual learners are still required to receive necessary vaccines; however, a suspension will not be executed.

What are the school responsibilities for implementing ISPA student suspension?

Responsibilities throughout entire suspension process:

- Receive immunization information from students.
- Fax all immunization information to the Immunization Program at 705.677.9624 or VPDschoolfax@phsd.ca. Keep all faxed immunization information until the active suspension period is over. This is a confidential fax for schools and health care provider use and should not be given to parents for reporting purposes. If you receive any exemption forms, please also mail the original forms to Public Health Sudbury & Districts.
- Receive the Order for Suspension via Canada Post and keep them until the active suspension period is over. Then the school will need to file the Order for Suspension according to your Board’s record retention policies.

On the first day of active suspension (over the telephone):

- Review list of suspended students with the public health nurse.
- Inform student or their parent/guardian that student is suspended according to the ISPA.
- Provide a photocopy of the Order for Suspension to students, if needed.
- Advise suspended students or their parents/guardians that:
 - They may return to the school as soon as the requested immunization information or a valid exemption form is received, reviewed, and approved by Public Health Sudbury & Districts. See below for further exemption requirements.
 - The suspension may last for up to 20 school days if required information is not received.
 - The suspension may be re-issued for a period of another 20 days if the information is not received.

During the active suspension period:

- Review list of suspended students daily with the public health nurse.
- Ensure that suspended students on the list do not attend school without approval from Public Health Sudbury & Districts.
- Contact the public health nurse for support at 705.522.9200, ext. 721 (toll-free 1.866.522.9200) if needed.

Why does Public Health Sudbury & Districts require schools to suspend students due to incomplete vaccination requirements?

Ontario law requires public health agencies to keep and review vaccination records for all students under 18 years of age. ISPA protects children from vaccine preventable diseases and reduces the risk of disease outbreaks in schools.

Students for whom Public Health Sudbury & Districts does not have up to date immunization records or valid exemptions will be temporarily suspended by the school until the required records are provided to public health.

When will schools be made aware of upcoming suspension dates?

Your school will receive a notice in March outlining the scheduled suspension dates for students in your school.

How will the Order for Suspension be issued?

The Medical Officer of Health will issue the order requiring the school operator to suspend the student. The original order will be mailed to the school to the attention of the principal via Canada Post and a copy of the order will be mailed to the parent or guardian.

Report vaccines:
705.522.9200, ext. 721
phsd.ca/reportvaccines

What is the duration of suspension?

The suspension may last for up to 20 school days until records are provided, reviewed, and approved by Public Health Sudbury & Districts. The suspension may be re-issued for additional periods of up to 20 days if the information is not received.

When can suspended students return to school?

They can return to school when one of the following has been provided to Public Health Sudbury & Districts:

- **Proof of required immunizations.**

OR

- **Statement of Medical Exemption:**
This form must be completed and signed by a physician or a nurse practitioner, stating the reason for the medical exemption.

OR

- **Statement of Conscience or Religious Belief:**
The affidavit must be sworn by a Commissioner of Oaths. Changes to the legislation surrounding exemption forms for non-medical reasons now requires parents and guardians to also complete an education session on immunization at one of Public Health Sudbury & Districts' offices (except the Elm place location).

Both forms can be downloaded from the Ontario government website at www.forms.ssb.gov.on.ca.

Important: Schools must not remove students from the suspension list unless they have been advised to do so by Public Health Sudbury & Districts.

What does it mean to “lift” a student from the suspension list?

Temporary “lifts” can be given to students to allow school attendance during the suspension period by Public Health Sudbury & Districts.

Public health nurses could allow a temporary “lift” for students for medical reasons for parents/students in the process of obtaining exemptions, booked appointment for vaccination with a health care provider after the official suspension date, etc. These “lifts” are granted following discussion with the parent or guardian of the student and on a case-by-case basis.

Who is responsible for reporting immunizations to Public Health Sudbury & Districts?

It is the parents/guardians’ responsibility to report their child’s immunizations to Public Health Sudbury & Districts. Although some health care providers’ offices do report children’s immunizations to us, they are not mandated to do so.

Schools can encourage parents/guardians to take the following steps to ensure that their child meets the immunization requirements:

- Check with their health care provider to ensure their child’s immunization record is up to date.
- Ensure that their child’s updated immunization record has been reported to Public Health Sudbury & Districts.

Parents and guardians of students 15 years of age and younger can access and update their child’s immunization record by logging into phsd.ca/reportvaccines. Students 16 years of age and older can access and update their own records at phsd.ca/reportvaccines.

How do we involve and inform parents/guardians?

In partnership with schools, key messages are delivered to parents/guardians and schools via letters, fact sheets, and consent forms.

An online reporting tool is available to give parents/guardians a convenient way to report their child’s vaccinations to Public Health Sudbury & Districts at phsd.ca/reportvaccines.

Where can schools direct parents/guardians to obtain required vaccinations?

- Health care provider
- Walk-in clinic
- Public Health Sudbury & Districts, **705.522.9200**

You must obtain a written copy of the vaccine record and contact Public Health Sudbury & Districts to report the vaccines.

Where can schools direct parents/guardians questions?

A dedicated phone line is available to answer calls related to student immunizations at **705.522.9200, ext. 458 (toll-free 1.866.522.9200)**.