

Immunisation Requirements for Enrolment

What are the NSW immunisation requirements for preschool?

- Children who are unvaccinated due to their parent's conscientious objection will no longer be able to be enrolled in preschool
- It is an offence (with a penalty of 50 penalty units) for a director to fail to comply with the preschool vaccination enrolment requirements
- It is an offence (with a penalty of 50 penalty units) for a person to forge or falsify a vaccination certificate

Children who cannot be fully vaccinated due to a medical condition or who are on a recognised catch-up schedule will still be able to be enrolled upon presentation of the appropriate form signed by a medical practitioner.

These requirements do not change other existing provisions. A register of the age appropriate vaccination documentation still needs to be maintained for each child (a register template is available at Strengthening vaccination requirements for child care) and in the event of specified vaccine preventable disease outbreak in a child care centre the public health officer can exclude children who are not vaccinated for that disease to protect them from infection and prevent them from passing diseases to others.

What is enrolment?

Enrolment is the process of booking a place for a child in a preschool for the first-time involving completion of an enrolment form, provision of other documentation (i.e. birth certificate, proof of address, AIR Immunisation History Statement) and often payment of a deposit. Note: enrolment does not include the processes of committing an enrolled child to continued attendance in subsequent years at the same preschool centre (sometimes known as 're-enrolment').

What forms are required to be provided at enrolment?

Parents must provide a copy of one or more of the following documents to enrol in a preschool:

- an **AIR Immunisation History Statement** which shows that the child is up to date with their scheduled vaccinations or
- an **AIR Immunisation History Form** on which the immunisation provider has certified that the child is on a recognised catch-up schedule (temporary for 6 months only) or
- an **AIR Immunisation Medical Exemption Form** which has been certified by a GP
No other form of documentation is acceptable. The documents must be stored by the director in a secure location for 3 years, unless a child transfers to another child care centre.

Which vaccines must a child have to be fully vaccinated?

The NSW Immunisation Schedule sets out the age-appropriate vaccines for children and the AIR Immunisation History Statement will indicate if the child is up to date with their vaccinations.

What if a parent fails to provide the required documents?

Directors of preschools **cannot enrol children** if the required documents are not provided.

Which children are exempt from these requirements?

The following classes of children are **temporarily exempt** from these requirements and the documentation must be provided **within 12 weeks** from the date of enrolment in the preschool:

- those who are subject to a guardianship order under section 79A of the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998
- those who have been placed in out-of-home care
- those who are being cared for by an adult who is not the child's parent due to exceptional circumstances such as illness or incapacity
- those who have been evacuated following a state of emergency (for example, a declared natural disaster)
- Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children

Do parents have a choice to vaccinate their children?

Yes. Vaccination is not compulsory and parents will continue to have the choice whether or not to vaccinate their child. However, **conscientious objectors will no longer be able to enrol their children in preschool and will need to make alternative arrangements.**

Are unimmunised children able to enrol in childcare?

The **only unimmunised children who can be enrolled in preschool** are **those who are on a recognised catch-up schedule (provided that the appropriate documentation has been provided), or those who are unimmunised due to medical reasons as described at section 2.1.4 of the *Australian Immunisation Handbook 10th ed***(provided that the appropriate documentation has been provided), or children who are too young to be immunised (under 2 months of age). Children who are unimmunised for a disease may be asked to stay at home if there is an outbreak of that vaccine preventable disease in a preschool.

How do parents access an AIR Immunisation History Statement for their child?

Parents automatically receive their child's AIR Immunisation History Statement in the mail after they complete their immunisation schedule. A copy of their child's immunisation details can also be obtained at any time by:

- using their Medicare online account through MyGov
- using the Medicare Express Plus App
- calling the AIR General Enquiries Line on 1800 653 809

What if a child was vaccinated overseas?

Overseas immunisation records must **not** be accepted by preschools. The overseas immunisation records need to be assessed by an Australian immunisation provider who will transfer the information to the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR). Parents can then request an AIR Immunisation History Statement.

Which diseases must preschool facility directors report to public health units?

Under the NSW Public Health Act 2010 child care centres must notify the following 9 vaccine preventable diseases to the local Public Health Unit on **1300 066 055**:

- Diphtheria
- Haemophilus influenzae type b (Hib)
- Measles
- Meningococcal C
- Mumps
- Pertussis (whooping cough)
- Poliomyelitis
- Rubella
- Tetanus.

The Public Health Unit may need to review the centre's immunisation register to determine which children are at risk from the outbreak. Following assessment of the situation, the public health officer may instruct the director to exclude certain children for a period or provide advice regarding preventive measures.

How are the requirements being enforced?

New offences have been created to ensure that preschool directors only enrol children for whom the appropriate forms have been provided, and that these forms have not been forged or falsified, with fines up to \$5,500. This is in addition to the current regulatory activities undertaken by the Department of Education under the Education and Care Services National Law and Regulations.

Who can I contact for more information?

More information about the new requirements is available by contacting your local Public Health Unit on **1300 066 055**. For more information about immunisation visit immunisation.health.nsw.gov.au