



Immunization of School Pupils Act (ISPA)

Information for schools within the Sudbury & Manitoulin districts

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The Immunization of School Pupils Act (ISPA)

The [Immunization of School Pupils Act R.S.O. 1990 \(ISPA\)](#) is an Ontario law which requires all school-aged children to be up to date with required immunizations, or have a valid statement of exemption for medical reasons, reasons of conscience, or religious beliefs to attend school.

The ISPA gives the local Medical Officer of Health (MOH) the authority to order the suspension of a student from school for not complying with the requirements of the Act.

Required immunizations include diphtheria, polio, tetanus, measles, mumps, rubella, meningococcal disease, and pertussis. Children born after January 1, 2010, are also required to have vaccination against varicella (chickenpox). If a child has been immunized according to [Ontario's Publicly Funded Immunization Schedule \(PDF\)](#), they will have received vaccines that protect against the designated diseases mentioned above, and they will not require any further immunizations. COVID-19, Influenza, Hepatitis B, and Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccines are strongly recommended, but not required, to attend school.

Parents and guardians are required to report their child's immunizations to Public Health, and to keep immunization information up to date. If a child cannot be vaccinated for a medical reason, or if a parent or guardian decides not to immunize their child for religious or personal reasons, a [valid vaccine exemption](#) must be submitted to Public Health.

Under ISPA, Public Health units are required to:

- collect and maintain immunization records for students under the age of 18 who are registered to attend school
- assess all student immunization records to ensure that students are up to date and protected from vaccine preventable diseases
- mail notices to parents and guardians of students who have incomplete immunization records and request that any missing information be updated notifying them the student may be at risk for school suspension if action is not taken
- enforce the ISPA by ordering the suspension of students who have not met the requirements

Where can students get immunized?

All required vaccines are publicly funded and available free of charge in Ontario.

If a student requires a vaccine, they can have it administered at the following locations:

- book an appointment with their health care provider
- visit a walk-in clinic
- [contact](#) Public Health

It is important that vaccine administration dates are reported to Public Health.

Reporting immunization records to Public Health

Parents and guardians are responsible for updating Public Health every time their child receives an immunization. Health care providers are not mandated to report immunizations that they provide.

Immunization information can be reported in the following ways:

- **online:** Immunization records can be viewed and uploaded through the Immunization Connect Ontario (ICON) tool. Visit sdhu.icon.ehealthontario.ca.
- **in person:** Immunization records can be dropped off to any of our locations during regular business hours.
- **email:** Photos of the immunization record can be emailed to ISPA@phsd.ca.
**Note: Email is not fully secure and may risk data privacy.*
- **by mail:** Records can be sent to the following address:
Public Health Sudbury & Districts
Attention: Health Promotion and Vaccine Preventable Diseases Division
1300 Paris Street
Sudbury, ON P3E 3A3

According to the Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA), individuals 16 years and older must give consent for their parent or guardian to discuss or access their health records. While a parent or guardian can submit a record, any students 16 years and older must be available to discuss the details of these records with a nurse or provide consent for their parent or guardian to act on their behalf.

Vaccine exemptions

Under the ISPA, students can be exempted from immunization for medical reasons (for example, if the child has a medical condition that prevents them from receiving the vaccine). For exemptions due to medical reasons or serological proof of immunity, a [Statement of Medical Exemption](#) form must be completed and signed by a physician or nurse practitioner and submitted to Public Health.

Students can also be exempted from immunization due to personal beliefs (also called conscientious or philosophical) or religious belief. A [Statement of Conscience or Religious Belief form](#) is a legal document that must be signed by a commissioner for taking affidavits in Ontario (such as a lawyer, notary public, clerk, judge, justice of the peace) and submitted to Public Health. Parents and guardians must also complete a vaccine education session [available through Public Health](#).

To protect the school community students who have vaccine exemptions may be excluded from school if there is an outbreak of a vaccine preventable disease as designated by the ISPA.

The ISPA enforcement process

Every year, Public Health Sudbury & Districts assesses the immunization records of all school aged children. Students who have not yet turned 18 years of age can be suspended from school if Public Health does not receive proof that the student has either received the required immunizations or that they have a valid exemption.

Public Health provides parents and guardians with appropriate notice that their child is at risk for school suspension well in advance of sending the Order for Suspension from Attendance at School. This legal document orders the student to be suspended for a period of up to 20 school days unless the required information is provided. The order can be rescinded (stopped) by the MOH, and the student can return to school once Public Health receives, assesses, and processes the required immunization information or the valid exemption.

School suspension information will be communicated between Public Health and a designated school administrative contact, such as the principal. Public Health will contact each school daily during the suspension period to update the student suspension list and to ensure that suspended students are not attending school.

Public Health will make every effort to avoid issuing an Order for Suspension from Attendance at School by

- sending communications prior to the ISPA enforcement period about the ISPA process to parents and guardians
- mailing reminder notices to parents and guardians –these notices provide individual student-specific details about actions required and next steps
- working with students and families to facilitate access to immunization
- assisting families in obtaining and updating immunization records
- providing parents and guardians with information about the requirements to complete a valid vaccine exemption, as well as processing and documenting vaccine exemptions in the student's immunization record

By working together, it is possible to obtain up-to-date immunization records for most students before school suspensions take effect.

ISPA communications to parents and guardians

Every year before the ISPA assessment period, Public Health will provide an ISPA information letter to the school boards, requesting it be emailed to parents/guardians.

The letter will advise parents and guardians that:

- students must have up-to-date immunization records on file with Public Health

- students may be suspended from school if their immunization records are not updated by the identified deadline
- parents and guardians can review their child’s online immunization record at phsd.ca
- parents should make an immunization appointment with a health care provider if their child is missing any vaccines
- students’ vaccines must be reported to Public Health

First notice (request to update immunization information) – letter mailed directly to parents and guardians

Public Health will mail a notice directly to parents and guardians of students with incomplete immunization records. This letter will identify the specific immunizations still missing on the student’s record and will request parents to take the most applicable action(s) listed below to avoid school suspension.

Actions for parents and guardians to take if they receive a letter from Public Health:

- report any missing immunization information to [Public Health](#),
- arrange for the student to receive the missing vaccines through a health care provider and report the immunizations to Public Health,
- submit a Statement of Medical Exemption form to Public Health or
- submit a Statement of Conscience or Religious Belief form to Public Health with the vaccine education certificate
- contact Public Health if they require assistance accessing publicly funded vaccines or have questions related to the letter

Final notice (order for suspension from attendance at school) – a copy of the legal order mailed directly to parents and guardians

- As per the requirements of the ISPA, students who have incomplete immunization records beyond the notice period will be issued an *Order of Suspension from Attendance at School* by the MOH.
- A copy of the *Order for Suspension from Attendance at School* will be mailed and addressed to the parent or guardian and the student to be suspended.
- Public Health will provide the orders to the school principal (or designate).
- Families will be permitted to update the student’s immunization record and report it to Public Health before the date on which suspension takes effect. Suspensions will not be enforced if the required information is provided to Public Health *before* the suspension date.
- Starting the date of suspension, Public Health will send a daily updated list and contact affected schools as needed, to ensure suspended students are not attending school. Schools should prepare to document such attendance daily.

Actions and responsibilities for school administrators

One week prior to the suspension day, school administrators or their designate will receive a list of students who are receiving an Order for Suspension. The school should carefully review the school strategy for managing suspensions including

- reviewing the suspension list to ensure that the students on the list are enrolled in the school and notify the Public Health of any discrepancies
- notifying students or families who are on the suspension list that they will be suspended on suspension day and will not be allowed at school until they have completed the requirements
- requesting that students or families contact Public Health to resolve or report any immunization information that is outstanding to avoid suspension.

School suspension period

The ISPA requires that the suspension period is in place for up to 20 instructional days (school PA days and holidays are not included)

- Public Health will provide school and school board administrators with information about the dates for each 20-day suspension period.
- If a suspended student arrives at school at any time during the suspension period, the student must remain out of class and be escorted to a designated area until arrangements are made for the student to return home.
- The student is not permitted to return to school until the required immunization information or a valid exemption has been provided to Public Health.
- Public Health will provide daily lists identifying the students who remain suspended to the principal or designate during the suspension period.
- Once updated immunization information has been received, reviewed and assessed by Public Health, or a valid exemption is provided, the suspension will be rescinded (lifted) and the student may return to school on the next school day.
- Students who attend a public health immunization clinic during the suspension period will receive an admittance record which identifies the student is no longer suspended. Students can return to school on the same day they attend the clinic by presenting this record to the school administrator or designate.
- Students who have been removed from the suspension lists may return to school.
- If there are health equity concerns related to suspending a student (e.g. safety at home or risk of academic failure due to missed school), please contact Public Health to discuss potential implications.
- Please contact Public Health at 705.522.9200 ext. 721 for any questions or concerns. Note: this dedicated extension is for school administrative purposes only.
- Please direct all inquiries from parents and students to Public Health at 705.522.9200 ext.458, or email ISPA@phsd.ca.

Actions and responsibilities for school administrators during the suspension period

It is the responsibility of the school principal to:

- enforce the suspension order
- manage suspensions according to school strategy or policy
- ensure that suspended students are not attending school, are not on school property, or obtaining co-op hours through the school board

How parents, guardians, and students can contact Public Health Sudbury & Districts

- call 705.522.9200 ext.458
- email ISPA@phsd.ca

Sample Order for Suspension from Attendance at School



Public Health Sudbury & Districts
1300 Paris Street, Sudbury, ON Canada P3E 3A3
Tel: 705.522.9200, ext. 458 | Fax: 705.677.9616

Order for Suspension from Attendance at School Pursuant to s.6 of the Immunization of School Pupils Act R.S.O. 1990

To: Principal of

Serve: Parent/Guardian of, and student if 16 or 17 years of age:

«First_Name» «Last_Name» OIID: «Ontario_Immunization_ID»
«Street_Address» D.O.B: «Date_of_Birth» Gender: «Gender»
«City», «Province» «Postal_Code» School: «School_Daycare»

I, Dr. Mustafa Hirji, Medical Officer of Health, Public Health Sudbury & Districts, hereby order the suspension of the above-named pupil for a period of twenty (20) school days:

From: «Suspension_Date» To: «M_20_Days»

This order will be cancelled only when

- i. the student completes the prescribed program of immunization and proof of this is received as indicated in 1(a), or
- ii. a valid vaccine exemption is obtained for the student, and proof is received by Public Health Sudbury & Districts.

The reasons for this order are

1. I have not received one of the following for the above named student:
 - a) A statement that the student has completed the prescribed program of immunization in relation to:

«DiseasesAgents».

OR

- b) A statement of medical exemption for the above disease(s), OR
 - c) A further medical exemption to replace one that has expired for the above disease(s), OR
 - d) A statement of conscience or religious belief (commissioned affidavit required) for the above disease(s).
2. I am not satisfied that the pupil has completed, has commenced, and will complete or will commence and complete the prescribed program of immunization in relation to the designated diseases indicated above.

Parent/Guardian of/or the student named if 16 or 17 years of age:

Questions about this Order can be directed to Public Health Sudbury & Districts at 705.522.9200, ext. 458.

If you wish to appeal this order, you are entitled to a hearing by the Health Services Appeal and Review Board if you mail or deliver (1) to me, (2) to the Health Services Appeal and Review Board, 151 Bloor St. West, 9th Floor, Toronto, ON M5S 2T5, and (3) to the principal of «School_Daycare» a request for a hearing within 15 days of this notice being served.

Although a hearing may be requested, this order takes effect when it is served and the order remains active until (1) proof of vaccination as above is received, (2) proof of a valid vaccine exemption as above is received, or (3) the appeal before the Health Services Appeal and Review Board is heard and is successful.

M. Mustafa Hirji, MD, MPH, FRCPC
Acting Medical Officer of Health and Chief Executive Officer

Date served: <date>

Sample Admittance Record

Admittance Record



Public Health
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This student has fulfilled the requirements to attend school in accordance with the Immunization of School Pupil's Act. Please allow this student admittance to school:

Name			
Date		PHN	

phsd.ca

705.522.9200, ext. 458

Vaccination requirements to attend school

Information for parents and guardians

What is the *Immunization of School Pupils Act (ISPA)*?

The *Immunization of School Pupils Act R.S.O. 1990* (ISPA) is an Ontario law which requires students to have up-to-date immunizations (or a valid statement of exemption for medical reasons, reasons of conscience, or religious beliefs) to attend school. Required immunizations include diphtheria, polio, tetanus, measles, mumps, rubella, meningococcal disease, and pertussis. Children born after January 1, 2010, are also required to have vaccination against varicella (chickenpox). Under ISPA legislation, if students do not have all required immunizations, they can be suspended from school for up to 20 school days.

If you received a letter from Public Health, one or more of the following statements may apply:

- Public Health does not have an immunization record on file for your child.
- Your child is missing one or more required vaccines or doses to meet Ontario's immunization requirements for school attendance.
- Your child might be up to date with all required immunizations; however, you did not report the administration dates to Public Health.
- Your child may have received invalid doses that do not meet the immunization requirements under ISPA.

- Public Health has not received a medical or non-medical exemption form for your child to be exempted from receiving immunizations.

Why didn't my child's health care provider or school submit my child's immunization record to Public Health?

Parents or guardians are responsible for updating Public Health every time their child receives an immunization. The information is maintained in a confidential provincial database called Panorama.

Your child's health care provider or school are not mandated to report your child's immunization to Public Health.

What do I do next?

- Review your child's immunization record. Compare the immunization record Public Health has on file with your immunization record at home and with your health care provider. Only vaccines required for school are shown in your letter.
- In some cases, your health care provider may tell you that your child's immunization is up to date; however, the information may not have been reported to Public Health. We advise you to obtain a copy of the record and submit it to Public Health.
- If your child is missing the vaccine(s) listed in the letter, ensure they receive the immunization through your health care provider or at a walk-in clinic. Update Public Health once your child receives the vaccine(s).

- If your child requires an exemption from vaccination for medical, religious or conscientious reasons, visit www.phsd.ca for further information about obtaining one.
- If you are having difficulty accessing publicly funded vaccines in the community or need assistance accessing your child's immunization record, contact Public Health at 705.522.9200 ext.458.
- If your child is 16 years of age or older, they can access and update their own records. Public Health will need their consent to speak to you on their behalf.
- **Email:** Send a photo of the immunization record to ISPA@phsd.ca. **Note: Email is not fully secure and may risk data privacy.*
- **By mail:** Send records to
Public Health Sudbury & Districts
Attention: Health Promotion and Vaccine Preventable Diseases Division
1300 Paris Street
Sudbury, ON P3E 3A3

How can I report my child's vaccinations to Public Health Sudbury & Districts?

- **Online:** You can view and upload your child's immunization records through the Immunization Connect Ontario (ICON) tool. Visit sdhu.icon.ehealthontario.ca.



- **In person:** Drop off a copy of your child's immunization record to any of our locations during regular business hours.