

Information for foster and kinship carers



Making it easier to meet the health care needs of children in out-of-home care

Immunisation

Why is immunisation important?

Immunising children helps to protect them against harmful diseases and is essential for meeting their health care needs. It is common for children in out-of-home care to miss their immunisations due to disruptions with coming into care, or changing placements.

To ensure children in out-of-home care are immunised in line with the Queensland Immunisation Schedule, we are making it easier for foster and kinship carers to keep children in their care up-to-date with their vaccinations.

Do I need consent to immunise the child in my care?

If the child in your care is under the **guardianship** of Child Safety, you no longer need the department's consent every time you want to make appointments with healthcare providers for immunisation.

Child Safety Officers will provide you with a new Authority to Care form that includes consent for immunisation. It is important that you take this form to each immunisation appointment to inform the healthcare provider that the department has given consent.

However, if the child in your care is in the **custody** of Child Safety, the department must seek parental consent for the child to be immunised.

When does a child need to be immunised?

The Queensland Immunisation Schedule lists all routine and additional vaccinations.

It is recommended that children are immunised at the ages of 2, 4, 6, 12 and 18 months, and then at four years of age.

Additional vaccinations are recommended for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and children with certain medical conditions.

Vaccines are also offered to young people attending secondary school through the School Immunisation Program. Young people are provided with vaccine information and consent forms to take home. The vaccine will only be given to a young person if the consent form has been completed and returned to the school or immunisation provider.

If any of the routine vaccinations are missed, you can talk to your doctor to arrange for the child to receive the appropriate vaccinations.

For more information about the immunisation schedule, go to the Queensland Health website www.health.qld.gov.au and search for Queensland Immunisation Schedule.

Do I need to keep a record of the child's immunisation?

Yes, it is important to keep a record of a child's vaccinations. You must:

- » provide your Child Safety Officer with the details of each vaccine given to the child
- » share with your Child Safety Officer any information the immunisation provider gives you that may affect the child's future vaccinations
- » update the child's health passport with details of the child's vaccinations.

The immunisation provider will also send vaccination information to Queensland Health and the Australian Immunisation Register.

You can ask your Child Safety Officer for a copy of the child's immunisation history statement as a record of the child's immunisation status. The child's immunisation history statements should be kept in the child's health passport.

It is important for carers to be aware that Centrelink family payments, including Family Tax Benefit part A Supplement, Child Care Rebate and Child Care Benefit, may stop if a child is not up-to-date with their vaccinations.

Enrolling a child in childcare or school

Early childhood education and care services can now refuse the enrolment or attendance of children if they are not up-to-date with their scheduled vaccinations.

An early childhood education and care service can ask you to provide proof of immunisation when enrolling a child and copies of immunisation history statements to ensure the child has been vaccinated at 2, 4, 6, 12 and 18 months, and 4 years of age.

Useful links and other resources

- » Go to the Queensland Health website www.health.qld.gov.au/public-health/schools/immunisation for information about early childhood and school immunisation.
- » Call **13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84)**.
- » Talk to your doctor or immunisation provider.
- » Download the free VacciDate app for Android and Apple phones to manage a child's vaccination schedule in Queensland. Go to www.vaccinate.initiatives.qld.gov.au/vaccidate for more information.
- » Go to the Department of Human Services website www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/themes/families or call **13 61 50** for more information about changes to Centrelink family payments.

Blood tests

Do I need consent for a child in my care to have blood tests?

If you are caring for a child who is under the **guardianship** of Child Safety, you no longer need the department's consent for the child to have a blood test if it has been requested by a doctor to assist in diagnosis or medical intervention. This consent will also be included in the new Authority to Care form.

The department must, however, consent to any DNA blood testing of the child.

For children who are in the **custody** of Child Safety, the department must still seek parental consent for the child to have a blood test.

For more information talk to your Child Safety Officer.