

# Immunisation and enrolling in early childhood services

Information for early childhood education and care services  
October 2018

## No Jab, No Play – Changes to the Victorian law

Under the 'No Jab, No Play' legislation, before enrolling a child, early childhood education and care services have to first obtain evidence that the child is up to date with all vaccinations that are due for their age, or that they are able to receive.

An [Immunisation History Statement from the Australian Immunisation Register \(AIR\)](#) is the only form of documentation accepted for the purpose of enrolling in an early childhood education and care service.

After enrolment, parents will need to continue to provide up to date Immunisation History Statements to their child's early childhood service.

## About required documentation

### Under 'No Jab, No Play' what documentation is required as evidence of up-to-date vaccination?

To have an [enrolment confirmed](#) for a child in long day care, kindergarten, family day care or occasional care, parents/carers have to provide the service with:

- a current Immunisation History Statement from the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR); AND
- the statement must show that the child is up to date with all vaccinations that are due for their age, or that they are able to receive.

The Immunisation History Statement from the AIR lists the vaccines the child has received and, if applicable, which vaccines are due in the future and when. Medical exemption may also be listed, where applicable.

An Immunisation History Statement from the AIR is the only type of immunisation record that early childhood services can accept for the purposes of confirming enrolment and must be provided within the two months prior to the child starting at your service.

The Medicare logo and Australian Government crest must be present and identifiable to be considered a valid Immunisation History Statement. For example, if the statement is page two of a letter from Medicare,

both pages need to be presented to the service to confirm enrolment.

### How can parents/carers get an Immunisation History Statement from the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR)?

Parents/carers can print a copy of their child's Immunisation History Statement from their [myGov account](#) or the Express Plus Medicare mobile app. Alternatively, parents/carers can:

- call the AIR on phone 1800 653 809
- visit a Medicare or Centrelink office.

### How can parents/carers who are not eligible for Medicare get an Immunisation History Statement from the AIR?

Families who are not eligible to hold a Medicare card can ask their immunisation provider to print an Immunisation History Statement, or they can call the AIR to request an Immunisation History Statement be posted (allow up to two weeks for delivery by post).

A Translating and Interpreting Service is available by calling 131 450, Monday to Friday from 8:30am to 4:45pm.

### What do parents/carers whose child's vaccinations are not up-to-date need to do to obtain an Immunisation History Statement?

If a child's vaccinations are not up-to-date then parents/carers should consult their GP or local council immunisation service about bringing the child's vaccinations up to date.

Once the child is up to date with vaccinations, they can request an updated Immunisation History Statement from the AIR.

The updated Immunisation History Statement showing that vaccines are 'up-to-date' needs to be provided by the parent/carer to your service to confirm enrolment.

## How can parents/carers obtain an Immunisation History Statement if their child was vaccinated overseas?

Children who were vaccinated overseas must have their vaccine records assessed by a GP or immunisation nurse and be offered vaccination as required.

Once the child's records have been reviewed and updated by their GP, they can request an updated Immunisation History Statement from the AIR.

## About the grace period

There are some children in the community whose families face difficulties accessing vaccinations and/or the required documentation to prove immunisation status.

Under the legislation, some families are eligible to enrol and start at the childcare/kindergarten service under a 'grace period' provision while they bring their children's vaccinations up-to-date and/or obtain the required documentation.

Early childhood education and care services, with help from the Departments of Health and Human Services and Education and Training, will support families of children who are not up-to-date with their vaccinations and provide them with information as to where they can access vaccinations.

Children experiencing vulnerability and disadvantage are eligible to enrol in a service under a grace period, without having provided proof of up-to-date immunisation. The grace period provisions allow the family to continue to access early childhood education and care services while receiving information and assistance to get their child's immunisations up to date and to obtain the required Immunisation History Statement from the AIR that needs to be provided to the service.

Families who meet any of the following criteria are eligible for the grace period.

- **Evacuated children**
  - Children evacuated following emergency (such as flood or fire)
- **Children in emergency care**
  - Children in emergency care (for example, emergency foster care) under the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005
- **Children in the care of an adult who is not their parent**

- Children in the care of an adult who is not the child's parent due to exceptional circumstances such as illness or incapacity
- **Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Children**
  - Children identified by their parents as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
- **Other children experiencing vulnerability or disadvantage**
  - Children who hold or whose parents hold a health care card, pension concession card, Veterans Affairs Gold or White card
  - Children from a multiple birth of triplets or more
  - Children who are refugees or asylum seekers
- **Children known to child protection**
  - Children who are on or who have been on a Child Protection Order
  - Children in or who have been in foster care or out-of-home care
  - Children who have a report made about them under the Children Youth and Families Act 2005
  - Families that have received support through Family Services including ChildFIRST; Services Connect; a community-based child and family service; or an integrated family service.

## How long is the grace period?

The grace period is for 16 weeks commencing from the date that the child first attends your service.

## What needs to happen during the grace period?

### Early Childhood Education and Care Services

During the 16 week grace period, you are required to take reasonable steps to obtain the required Immunisation History Statement from the AIR. See the Immunisation Enrolment toolkit for further guidance.

The Departments of Health and Human Services and Education and Training have developed materials to support early childhood education and care services to implement the grace period provisions. This includes a [checklist to determine eligibility for the grace period](#) as well as information to provide to parents/carers about where to access immunisation services.

### Parents/carers

During the 16 week grace period parents/carers should endeavour to have their child vaccinated if required, and/or obtain the required Immunisation History Statement from the AIR and provide it to the service.

Your service can provide parents/carers with support and information to do this.

### **When can an early childhood education and care service confirm an enrolment?**

Having an application accepted or being registered on a waiting list for a place at your service is **not** a confirmed enrolment.

Confirmation of enrolment can be given by your service, no more than two months prior to the child first attending, only once the parent/carer has provided an Immunisation History Statement from the AIR to the service that shows that the child:

- is up to date with their immunisations (specifically, that no vaccines are overdue two months prior to the first day of attending; see [key dates work form](#)) OR
- has commenced [a recognised catch-up schedule](#) and that the next due vaccine/s on the catch-up schedule are not overdue two months prior to the first day of attending; see [key dates work form](#)) OR
- has a [medical condition](#) that prevents them from being fully immunised for their age OR
- is eligible to enrol under the 16 week [grace period](#) while your service works with the family to obtain the necessary immunisations/documentation.

An Immunisation History Statement from the AIR is the only accepted document for proving a child's immunisation status, including that they are up to date, or have commenced a [recognised catch up schedule](#) or have a [medical condition](#) that prevents them from being fully immunised for their age.

Evidence required to [qualify to enrol under the Grace Period provision](#) varies depending on the circumstances of the family. You should discuss the individual circumstances with the family.

### **Immunisation after enrolment**

Under Victorian law, parents/carers are required to continue to provide your service with evidence that their enrolled child is up to date with their immunisations.

Parents/carers will need to provide their child's service with a new Immunisation History Statement whenever their child receives (or was due to receive) immunisation/s after enrolment or in response to a request from you.

This obligation applies to the parents/carers of children enrolled in long day care, kindergarten, occasional care and family day care.

### **Why is this required?**

If there is a disease outbreak at your service, accurate and current evidence of immunisation is needed to identify children at risk (for example, children too young to be fully immunised against a disease) who may need to stay away from the service until it is safe for them to return.

The Victorian Government introduced this requirement to provide an important additional prompt to parents regarding immunisation as part of a continued effort to improve and maintain high childhood immunisation rates and protect the community from vaccine-preventable diseases.

### **What does the early childhood service do?**

Throughout the time a child is attending, services are required to take reasonable steps to obtain up to date Immunisation History Statements from parents/carers and keep the latest Statement with enrolment records. Reasonable steps include:

- Twice a year, requesting parents/carers provide an updated Immunisation History Statement to the service if their child has received or been due to receive a vaccination while attending
- Reviewing the enrolment records for some children whose parents/carers may be at greater risk of falling behind with their child's immunisations, and providing a follow up immunisation evidence request to parents/carers if necessary
- Assessing Immunisation History Statements to ensure they indicate the child is up to date with immunisations
- Supporting parents/carers to comply, by providing information or referral to support services.

### **What do parents/carers do?**

If an enrolled child has received a vaccine while they are attending an early childhood education and care service parents/carers should obtain an updated Immunisation History Statement from the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR) and provide it to you.

Some parents/carers may not remember to do this at the time their child is immunised, and a request from your service may prompt them to provide this.

If a parent/carer receives a request from you to ensure that you have the latest evidence of up to date immunisation, and the parent/carer knows that you already have the most up to date Immunisation History

Statement, they do not need to provide you with another copy.

## About vaccination

### Why are vaccinations so important?

Vaccination is one of the most effective ways of preventing disease worldwide. Modern vaccines provide high levels of protection against an increasing number of diseases which, in some cases, can be fatal. Worldwide, it is estimated that immunisation programs prevent approximately 2.5 million deaths each year.

The current immunisation rate in Victoria for children under 5 years of age is around 95 per cent. This level of immunisation coverage is necessary to halt the spread of particularly virulent diseases such as measles. However, there is always more that can be done.

Immunisation not only protects those people who have been vaccinated, it also protects those in our community who may be unable to receive vaccines themselves, by reducing the prevalence and spread of disease.

### Where can parents/carers access immunisation services?

GPs, immunisation nurses at local councils, and health clinics can provide immunisation services.

The [Better Health Channel](#) has a [health service locator](#) that can assist Victorians to find their nearest immunisation provider.

## About the 'No Jab, No Play' law

### What is the objective of the 'No Jab No Play' law?

The purpose of the No Jab No Play law is to help increase immunisation rates for young children in the community.

The legislation is designed to:

- provide a prompt regarding immunisation for parents/carers enrolling their child in early childhood education and care services
- allow for children of families experiencing vulnerability and disadvantage to be able to access the lifelong benefits of early childhood education and care, while being supported to obtain vaccinations and/or required evidence of vaccination.

'Conscientious objection' to vaccines is not an exemption under the law.

Since the introduction of the legislation in 2016, immunisation coverage rates for young children have been steadily increasing in Victoria and are now at around 95 per cent.

### Who does the 'No Jab, No Play' law impact and how?

The law applies to all early childhood education and care services<sup>1</sup> in Victoria providing:

- long day care
- kindergarten (including three and four year old kindergarten)
- occasional care
- family day care.

The law does not apply to:

- enrolment in primary or secondary school
- children attending an outside school hours care service (after school care, before school care, vacation care)
- enrolments of school children in long day care, family day care or occasional care
- casual occasional care services that offer care of no more than two hours per day and no more than six hours per week (for example, crèches at gyms and shopping centres)
- services primarily providing instruction on particular activities (for example, sport, dance or music)
- services primarily provided or shared by family members of the children (and a family member is readily available and retains responsibility for the child).

Before your service can confirm the enrolment of a child, the parent/carer must provide:

- a current Immunisation History Statement from the AIR, AND;
- the statement must show that the child is up to date with all vaccinations that they are due for their age, or that they are able to receive.

Your service can assist families of children who aren't up-to-date with their immunisations with support and information resources as to where they can access vaccinations.

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<sup>1</sup> approved under the *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010* and licensed under the *Children's Services Act 1996*

Resources are available to services to assist families of children who aren't up-to-date with their immunisations.

### How does the legislation work?

Anyone offering education and care services as defined under the *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010* is required to be licensed by the Department of Education and Training. The maximum penalty for operating an unlicensed education and care service is \$20,000 for an individual or \$100,000 for a company or incorporated association.

Licensed services are subject to regular audit and are required to meet minimum standards in relation to staffing, premises and operational requirements to protect children's safety, health and wellbeing. This includes adhering to the 'No Jab, No Play' requirements, where applicable.

## Resources for early childhood education and care services

### Immunisation enrolment toolkit

[The toolkit](#) has been designed to assist you with your legal responsibilities and immunisation record management under the 'No Jab, No Play' legislation in Victoria.

The toolkit is now only available as a digital resource on the Department of Health and Human Services website.

### Tools and templates

For enrolment

[Immunisation and enrolment decision aid](#): this flowchart outlines the steps required to make decisions in relation to immunisation status and enrolment.

[Key dates calculator](#): this tool allows you to enter relevant dates pertaining to immunisation and enrolment to determine compliance with Victorian requirements.

[Parent enrolment letter template](#): you can use this letter as a basis for correspondence with parents seeking to finalise enrolment. Copy, download or adapt this letter to suit your service.

[Grace period eligibility assessment form](#): use this assessment form to determine if a child who is not fully vaccinated can enrol and attend the service while the family seeks to obtain the required immunisation documents. This form is for use by you, in conversation

with the parent. This is not a form for parents to complete on their own.

[Key dates work form for immunisation and enrolment](#): this form can help your service quickly and easily assess if a child's vaccinations are up to date for their age in compliance with the definition in the legislation.

After enrolment

[Immunisation evidence request decision aid flowchart](#): A handy reference that shows the pathways to follow when issuing requests to parents/carers to provide the service with evidence of up to date immunisation.

[Parent initial immunisation evidence request text](#): This text can be adapted to suit services and includes minimum suggested text and additional suggested text. The minimum suggested text is available for download in a range of languages.

[Parent follow-up immunisation evidence request text](#): This text can be adapted for delivery via the services' chosen method for privately providing a follow-up request to individual parents for an up to date Immunisation History Statement.

[Scenarios for timing of immunisation evidence requests](#): This diagram shows two scenarios that services may find useful as a guide in determining when to issue requests for up to date Immunisation History Statements to parents.

[Parent Manual template text](#): this text can be used or adapted for inclusion in information provided to parents on enrolment. It provides information regarding the requirement for parents to continue to provide an up to date Immunisation History Statement if their child is due to receive vaccines while attending the service.

[Fact sheet for parents: Immunisation after enrolment](#): this fact sheet can be downloaded and provided to parents who require or request additional information regarding providing evidence of current immunisation while their child is attending the service.

## More information

### More about immunisation

[View the immunisation schedule](#)

[Immunisation – childhood fact sheet](#)

### Access this factsheet online

<https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/immunisation/vaccination-children/no-jab-no-play/early-childhood-professionals>

### Locate an immunisation provider

The Better Health Channel website has [a health service locator](#) that can assist Victorians to find their nearest immunisation provider.

### View the 'No Jab, No Play' legislation

View the legislation online [at Victorian Legislation and Parliamentary Documents](#). (Please note, due to

frequent changes to this site, a direct link to the Bill cannot be provided. Go to the 'Archive' link and look under '2015' for the [Public Health and Wellbeing Amendment \(No Jab, No Play\) Bill 2015](#))

### About Commonwealth 'No Jab, No PAY' initiative

For information about the Commonwealth Government No Jab No Pay law, call the Families and Parent Line on 13 61 50, or [visit the website](#).

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