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School Immunizations – New Certificate of Religious Exemption Requirement [1]

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Exemption certificate requires health care provider signature

SPRINGFIELD – Parents or legal guardians who object, for religious reasons, to their child being immunized for school entrance must submit a Certificate of Religious Exemption, which now must be signed by a health care provider. Signed into law on August 3, 2015, this new legislation requires a health care provider to sign the certificate confirming they have provided education to the parents or legal guardians about the benefits of immunizations and the health risks of not vaccinating students.

“Vaccines not only help protect vaccinated individuals, but also help protect entire communities by preventing and reducing the spread of infectious diseases,” said Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) Director Nirav D. Shah, M.D., J.D. “Because vaccines are not always 100 percent effective, it is important that as many people as possible are immunized to decrease the amount of disease circulating and help prevent illness and possibly even death.”

Educational information given by health care providers may include nationally accepted recommendations from federal agencies such as the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices, information from vaccine information statements, and vaccine package inserts.

“We recognize the importance of providing an option for religious exemption, but we also understand there must be a balance between family rights and the health of all students,” said State Superintendent of Education Tony Smith, Ph.D. “This certificate ensures that parents and students are fully aware of the risks of not being immunized.”

The certificate also reflects the parents or legal guardians understanding that their child may be excluded from school in the case of a vaccine-preventable disease outbreak or exposure. Parents or legal guardians must submit the certificate to their local school authority prior to children entering kindergarten, sixth grade, and ninth grade. This new requirement will be in place for religious

INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING

ILLINOIS CERTIFICATE OF RELIGIOUS EXEMPTION TO REQUIRED IMMUNIZATIONS AND/OR EXAMINATIONS FORM

Who may use the Certificate of Religious Exemption to Required Immunizations and/or Examinations Form:

- Parents or legal guardians who are requesting a religious exemption to immunizations or examinations **must** use this form for students entering kindergarten, sixth, or ninth grades.
- A separate form must be used for **each child** with a religious exemption enrolled to enter any public, charter, private or parochial preschool, kindergarten, elementary or secondary school.
- This form may not be used for exemptions from immunizations and/or examination for personal or philosophical reasons. Illinois law does not allow for such exemptions. (See excerpts below from Public Act 099-0249 enacted August 3, 2015 at page bottom.)

When use of this form becomes required: October 16, 2015

How to complete the Certificate of Religious Exemption to Required Immunizations and/or Examinations Form:

- Complete the Parent/Guardian sections, which include key information about the student and the school the student will be entering, and the immunizations or examinations for which religious exemption is being requested. Provide a statement of religious belief(s) **for each vaccination/examination requested**.
- The form must be signed by the child's parent or legal guardian **AND** the child's health care provider* **responsible for performing the child's health examination**.
- Submit the completed form to local school authority on or before October 15th of the school year, or by an earlier enrollment date established by a school district.

Religious Exemption from Immunizations and/or Examination Form Process:

- The local school authority is responsible for determining whether the information supplied on the Certificate of Religious Exemption to Required Immunizations and/or Examinations Form constitutes a valid religious objection.
- The local school authority shall inform the parent or legal guardian, at the time that the exemption is presented, of exclusion procedures, should there be an outbreak of one or more diseases from which the student is not protected, in accordance with the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) rules, Control of Communicable Diseases Code (77 Ill. Adm. Code 690).
- Exempting a child from health, dental, or eye examination does not exempt the child from participation in the program of physical education training provided in Section 27-5 through 27-7 of the Illinois School Code [105 ILCS 5/27-5 through 105 ILCS 5/27-7]. A separate request for exemption from physical education, if desired, would need to be presented.

Excerpt from Public Act 099-0249 enacted August 3, 2015:

Children of parents or legal guardians who object to health, dental, or eye examinations or any part thereof, or to immunizations or to vision and hearing screening tests on religious grounds shall not be required to undergo the examinations or immunizations if the parents or legal guardians present to the appropriate local school authority a signed Certificate of Religious Exemption detailing the grounds for objection and the specific immunizations and/or examinations to which they object. The grounds for objection must set forth the specific religious belief(s) that conflict with the examination, immunization, or other medical intervention. The certificate will be signed by the parent or legal guardian to confirm their awareness of the school's exclusion policies in the case of a vaccine preventable disease outbreak or exposure. The certificate must also be signed by the child's health care provider responsible for performing the child's examination for entry into kindergarten, sixth or ninth grade. This signature affirms that the provider educated the parent or legal guardian about the benefits of immunization and the health risks to the student and to the community from the communicable diseases for which immunization is required in Illinois.

The religious objection provided need not be directed by the tenets of an established religious organization. However, general philosophical or moral reluctance to allow physical examinations, eye examinations, immunizations, vision and hearing screening or dental examinations will not provide a sufficient basis for an exception to statutory requirements. The local school authority is responsible for determining if the content of the Certificate of Religious Exemption constitutes a valid religious objection.

The local school authority shall inform the parent or legal guardian of exclusion procedures in accordance with IDPH's rules, Control of Communicable Diseases Code (77 Ill. Adm. Code 690) at the time the objection is presented.

**ILLINOIS CERTIFICATE OF RELIGIOUS EXEMPTION
TO REQUIRED IMMUNIZATIONS AND/OR EXAMINATIONS FORM**

PARENT OR LEGAL GUARDIAN - COMPLETE THIS SECTION

Note: This form is required for all students entering kindergarten, sixth or ninth grades when parent(s) or legal guardian(s) is requesting a religious exemption on or after October 16, 2015. This form also must be submitted to request religious exemption for any student enrolling to enter any public, charter, private or parochial preschool, kindergarten, elementary or secondary school on or after October 16, 2015.

This form may NOT be used for personal or philosophical reasons. Illinois law does not allow for such exemptions.

Student Name:(last, first, middle) _____	Student Date of Birth: Month Day Year ____/____/____	School Name: _____	Grade: _____
Parent/Guardian Name: _____	Gender: ☐ M ☐ F	City: _____	Exemption requested for (mark all that apply): ☐ Hepatitis B ☐ DTaP ☐ Polio ☐ Hib ☐ Pneumococcal ☐ MMR ☐ Varicella ☐ Td/Tdap ☐ Meningococcal ☐ Health Exam ☐ Eye Exam ☐ Dental Exam ☐ Vision/Hearing Tests ☐ Other (indicate below)
Address: _____ _____	Telephone Number(s): _____ _____		

To receive an exemption to vaccination/examination, a parent or legal guardian must provide a statement detailing the religious beliefs that prevent the child from receiving each required school vaccinations/examination being requested. In the space provided below, state each vaccination or examination exemption requested and state the religious grounds for each request. If additional space is needed, attach additional page(s).

Religious Exemption Notice:

No student is required to have an immunization/examination that is contrary to the religious beliefs of his/her parent or legal guardian. However, not following vaccination recommendations may endanger the health or life of the unvaccinated student, others with whom they come in contact, and individuals in the community. In a disease outbreak, or after exposure to any of the diseases for which immunization is required, schools may exclude children who are not vaccinated in order to protect all students.

I have read the Religious Exemption Notice (above) and have provided requested information for each vaccination/examination being requested for religious exemption.

Signature of parent or legal guardian (required) _____

Date _____

HEALTH CARE PROVIDER* - COMPLETE THIS SECTION

Provision of information: I have provided the parent or legal guardian of the student named above, with information regarding **1) the required examinations, 2) the benefits of immunization, and 3) the health risks to the student and to the community from the communicable diseases for which immunization is required in Illinois.** I understand that my signature only reflects that this information was provided; I am not affirming the parent or legal guardian's religious beliefs regarding any examination, immunization or immunizing agent.

Health Care Provider Name: _____

Signature of health care provider* _____

Address: _____

Date: _____
(Must be within 1 year prior to school entry)

Telephone #: _____

*Health care provider responsible for performing child's health examination includes physicians licensed to practice medicine in all of its branches, advanced practice nurses, or physician assistants.