



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA
Department of Education

DATE: August 31, 2018

TO: Division Superintendents

FROM: James F. Lane, Superintendent of Public Instruction

SUBJECT: Tdap Immunization Schedule Specialist

The Virginia Department of Health (VDH) has requested the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) to disseminate this information to schools on recent changes in Tdap administration to sixth-grade students.

Per the *Code of Virginia*, § 32.1-46(A)(4) require the following:

Students in all public or private schools in Virginia are required to receive a booster dose of acellular pertussis via the Tdap vaccine prior to entry into the sixth grade, unless they have a valid medical or religious exemption. The Tdap booster acts to extend immunity from the original Diphtheria, Tetanus, and Pertussis (DTaP) primary series given as part of routine childhood immunizations.

The most recent Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommendations published in April 2018, indicate that children should be at least 11 years of age (rather than a minimum age of 10 years) before receiving the Tdap booster. Previously, if a child received the dose at age 10, the dose was considered valid and did not need to be repeated when the child turned 11. While many children turn 11 before entering the sixth grade, those who do not may not receive the vaccine at their doctor's office due to appropriate clinical adherence to the ACIP schedule. This change in the ACIP recommendations has caused some patients to return for another visit, as the child is not yet 11 years of age during the scheduled appointment. Additionally children whose birthdays occur during the summer may have difficulty scheduling an appointment with providers in time to meet this requirement. As a result, children who do not receive the vaccine prior to the start of sixth grade are considered inadequately immunized and must be excluded from school unless a medical or religious exemption is filed.

Schools require a Tdap booster before entry to sixth grade. With the new ACIP recommendations, there may be confusion on how to handle situations in which a student does

not have a Tdap vaccine on the first day of the 2018-2019 school year. Please see below for actions to take depending on the age of the student on the first day of school.

- If a student is 11 years of age, the student is required to have the Tdap vaccine, and provide documentary proof of immunization or a religious or medical exemption for admittance to school. Students who do not have documentation will be asked to visit their primary care provider or local health department to receive the Tdap vaccine before admittance to school.
 - A student may be admitted conditionally by providing documentary proof of having received at least one dose of the required immunization, accompanied by a schedule for completion of the required dose within 90 calendar days. As referenced by the *Code of Virginia* § 22.1-271.2(B).
- If a student is 10 years of age, and is not yet clinically indicated for a Tdap booster vaccine, there are two options:
 - Medical exemption process whereby a physician, nurse practitioner, or local health department states in writing that the vaccine is detrimental to the health of the child. As referenced by the *Code of Virginia* § 32.1-46(D)(2).
 - A student may be admitted conditionally by providing documentary proof of having received at least one dose of the required immunization, accompanied by a schedule for completion of the required dose within 90 calendar days. As referenced by the *Code of Virginia* § 22.1-271.2(B).

If you have questions related to Tdap immunization requirements, please contact Mr. Marshall Vogt, VDH, Epidemiologist, at Marshall.Vogt@vdh.virginia.gov; telephone (804) 864-8076 or Ms. Tracy White, VDOE, School Health Specialist, at Tracy.White@doe.virginia.gov; telephone (804) 786-8671.

JFL/TW/rt