

Frequently Asked Questions on Immunization Requirements for School Admittance

Q. *What is Provisional Enrollment?*

A. Provisional enrollment is a component of the rules adopted by the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) for the minimum immunization requirements for school entry. Provisional enrollment allows a student meeting certain criteria to be admitted to school on a temporary basis for up to 30 days. During this 30-day period, the parent is responsible for ensuring that the student receives the necessary vaccine(s) as fast as is medically feasible, provides a complete and current immunization record to the school, or has a valid vaccine exemption on file. Texas schools are also responsible for ensuring that immunization records are sent to requesting Texas schools within the 30- day period.

Q. *What government agency adopts the rules on provisional enrollment?*

A. According to the Texas Attorney General Opinion No. GA-0178, only DSHS, (formerly Texas Department of Health) may adopt rules relating to provisional admission.

Q. *Can DSHS adopt rules that would prohibit a student from being admitted into a school?*

A. Yes. Admission to a school is not allowed until records are produced showing (1) the child has been immunized in accordance with the rules; (2) the child has an exemption from immunization requirements on file with the school in accordance with the rules; or (3) the child is entitled to provisional enrollment.

Q. *What specific circumstances must a child fall under to qualify for provisional enrollment?*

A. Provisional enrollment allows a student to enroll in school under the following situations:

1 Transfer Students

- Students transferring from one Texas public or private school to another Texas school.

2 Homeless Students

- Students who are defined as homeless according to the federal McKinney- Vento Act, 42 USC §11302.

3 Active Duty Dependents

- Students who are dependent on active duty service members and are waiting on the transfer of their immunization records.

4 Students In-Progress

- Students who have received at least one dose of each specified age- appropriate vaccine required by the DSHS rules. To remain enrolled, students must complete the required subsequent doses of each vaccine series on schedule as rapidly as medically feasible and provide acceptable evidence of vaccination to the school. A school nurse or school administrator shall review the immunization status of a provisionally enrolled student every 30 days to ensure continued compliance in completing the required doses of vaccination. If, at the end of the 30-day period, a student has not received a subsequent dose of vaccine, the student is not in compliance and the school shall exclude the student from school attendance until the required dose(s) is (are) administered.

Q. *Can a child without an immunization record be enrolled provisionally if they are not homeless, are not transferring from a Texas school, are not a dependent of an active duty service member, or are not progressing towards obtaining immunizations as fast as is medically feasible?*

A. No. The child must obtain the first doses of the required vaccines and then they can be admitted provisionally as long as they are progressing towards receiving the remaining required vaccines as fast as is medically feasible.

Q. *What if a child does not have all of his or her shots up-to-date prior to starting school?*

A. The student is required to receive the necessary vaccinations or have a valid vaccine exemption on file in order to enroll or start school. If the student has started the series and is on schedule, he or she can enroll provisionally until it is medically feasible to receive the next vaccine dose.

Q. *What if the student is more than a year delinquent for a vaccine? Can this student be allowed to attend school provisionally at the beginning of a new school year?*

A. No. If more than the maximum amount of time to receive the next dose has expired, the student cannot attend school until he/she receives the required dose.

Q. What do parents or guardians need to show as proof that their child has started the vaccine series needed?

A. Acceptable documentation of immunizations is any record of immunizations validated by a physician or his/her designee, or public health personnel. The record must show the month, day, and year when each immunization was received.

Q. How long is the conscientious exemption valid?

A. The conscientious exemption is valid for two years.

Q. The child has no immunizations on file. I did receive a faxed copy of a Texas Religious Exemption dated in 1999. Does this child need a new affidavit?

A. No. Religious exemptions dated prior to September 1, 2003 are life-long exemptions.

Q. Where can parents take their children to get the required immunizations?

A. Parents should contact their children's physician. Alternatively, they can contact their local health department or the nearest DSHS Public Health Regional Office for information.

For more information about immunization requirements go to: www.ImmunizeTexas.com or contact the Immunization Unit at (800) 252-9152 or schoolimm@dshs.texas.gov