

Immunization Requirements

The State's [New Mexico Childcare/Pre-School/School Entry Immunization Requirements](#) are released annually.

New Mexico Immunization Law

New Mexico law requires that all students be immunized against certain vaccine-preventable communicable diseases (see [NMSA § 24 \(Health and Safety\)](#)). These requirements are determined by the NMDOH in collaboration with the New Mexico Vaccine Advisory Committee (VAC) using recommendations from the national Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP).

In the school setting, the School Nurse is best qualified to determine which students are missing required vaccinations and subsequently notifies parents/guardians. The NM Immunization Program surveys immunization records annually. All public, private, and charter schools are required to complete a self-reported immunization coverage survey by December 31 of each year. The Immunization Program then conducts a validation (via fax or in-person visits) on coverage data for a sample of schools. The sample covers over 20 enrolled kindergartens, including schools that did not return a completed survey or schools whose survey data was not submitted by a nurse.

New Mexico Immunization Exemption Law

Any minor child through his parent or guardian may file with the health authority charged with the duty of enforcing the immunization laws:

- 1. A certificate of a duly licensed physician stating that the physical condition of the child is such that immunization would seriously endanger the life or health of the child; or*
- 2. Affidavits or written affirmation from an officer of a recognized religious denomination that such child's parents or guardians are bona fide members of a denomination whose religious teaching requires reliance upon prayer or spiritual means alone for healing; or*
- 3. Affidavits or written affirmation from his parent or legal guardian that his religious beliefs, held either individually or jointly with others, do not permit the administration of vaccine or other immunizing agent.*

[NMSA § 24.5.3](#)

New Mexico law does not grant immunization exemptions for philosophical or personal reasons.

Reporting in New Mexico Statewide Immunization Information System (NMSIIS)

Physicians, nurses, pharmacists and other health care providers shall report on immunization to the immunization registry unless the patient, or the patient's guardian if the patient is a minor, refuses to allow reporting of this information.

[NMSA § 24.5.8.](#)

It is state law that all immunizations given in the State of New Mexico must be entered into NMSIIS. The signed consent gives authorization from a parent or guardian for this to occur. School Nurses may have access to NMSIIS and may use it to look up records, enter records from school records as historical, and enter any immunizations the School Nurse gives during school immunization clinics. The [School Consent Form](#) used to enter records into NMSIIS is a customizable form for use by schools to collect consent from parents so students' historic immunization records may be added to NMSIIS. If collaborating with public health for a vaccine clinic, the responsibility of entering the vaccine falls to public health.

Public Health Authority for School Health Offices

State law requires New Mexico schools to:

- Maintain records of students' immunizations.
- Make those records available to the NMDOH.
- Report immunization status of students to the NMDOH.
- Commence disenrollment proceedings on students who do not have satisfactory evidence of immunizations or valid exemption. Students whom the School Nurse deems to be in-process may continue attending school, or may register if not yet attending.

To accomplish this, the NMDOH grants school nursing offices the authority, under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), to serve as "public health authority" to collect immunization information for school-aged children without a release of information from parents. This [Public Health Authority Letter](#) may be used as proof of this role. Some resources for school nursing offices to use to obtain immunization information include:

- NMSIIS.
- Health care providers who give immunizations to children.
- Immunization records supplied by parents.
- Immunization records from other schools.

New Mexico Administrative Codes on Immunizations

Within 60 days of receipt of a request for exemption from immunization, the department of health immunization program manager shall review the request to determine whether the certificate has been duly completed. Incomplete requests shall be returned to the requester with information regarding what elements are missing.

[NMAC § 7.5.3.8](#)

For more information, see:

- [NMAC § 6.12.2](#) (Public School Administration – Health and Safety)
- [NMAC § 7.5.2](#) (Immunization Requirement)
- [NMAC § 7.5.3](#) (Immunization Exemptions)

Immunization Exemption

A student in New Mexico may be exempt from NM Department of Health (DOH) and NM Public Education Department (PED) immunization requirements by completing the current [Exemption from Immunization Form](#).

Who May Use the Exemption from Immunization Form?

- Individuals requesting a religious or medical exemption to immunization may use this form.
- This form must be used for all children with an exemption going into any public, private, or parochial preschool, kindergarten, elementary, secondary school, or home school. It also must be used for children attending daycare or childcare facilities.
- This form must **not** be used for exemption from immunization for personal or philosophical reasons. New Mexico law **does not** allow for such exemptions.

How to Complete the Exemption from Immunization Form

- Fill out all blank lines and check boxes, including the check boxes for the religious or medical options.
- For medical exemptions, attach the letter from your duly-licensed physician to this form.
- For religious exemptions using an affidavit (statement of fact), attach the affidavit to this form.
- A notary public must sign the form. The date that the notary public signs the form must match the date that the parent/guardian signs the form.
- Mail the form to the New Mexico Department of Health at the address shown on the form. You may also submit your form in a drop box located at the Department of Health in Santa Fe

[\(Runnels Building 1190 S Saint Francis Dr, Santa Fe, NM 87505\).](#)

Department of Health Exemption from Immunization Form Processing

- The Department of Health has 60 days from receipt of the Exemption from Immunization Form to either approve or disapprove the form. Make sure that the Department of Health receives the form at least 60 days prior to the day the child starts school.
- Upon approval, the Department of Health will mail one copy of the approved form to the parent/guardian. The parent/guardian must provide a copy of the approved form to the child's preschool, school, daycare, or childcare facility.
- The School Nurse may also choose to review and print any approved exemption requests in NMSIIS. Located in NMSIIS under Patients/Exemptions, a "Patient Exemptions Letter" link is available and will allow the school to print an official exemption letter for the student's file.
- If your request is not approved, you will get a letter from the Department of Health telling you why your request was denied. You will also receive information on how to arrange a meeting with the Department of Health should you wish to protest.
- Exemptions are valid for nine months and must be re-submitted each academic year, including any supporting medical documentation, which must also be current.

Immunization Assessment

- Students that are up-to-date in accordance with the current [NM Childcare/Pre-School/School Entry Immunization Requirements Schedule](#) meet New Mexico immunization standards and may enroll in and attend school.
- For students who have no immunization record but were formerly enrolled in a school in the United States, a formal request for immunization records must be made by the School Nurse to the previous school attended. The student **should not be enrolled until the records are received**. If the student is up-to-date, according to [NM Childcare/Pre-School/School Entry Immunization Requirements](#), the student may be enrolled. If the student was formerly enrolled in a school in another country and has no record or any contact information to acquire records, initiation of required immunizations must begin immediately for the student to be enrolled in any public, private, or charter school in New Mexico. The only exceptions to this rule are if the child is certified as homeless or if the child's parent or guardian is active military. If either of these exceptions apply, the student may be enrolled.
- Students whose immunizations are not up-to-date but who have received all immunizations currently permissible by a medical practice are considered in-process and may be enrolled.
- Students who are attempting to reach compliance but are behind on a vaccination series are no longer considered in process. The [CDC Catch-up Immunization Schedule](#) should be used to help assess what the student needs to become compliant. If the student is currently enrolled, disenrollment proceedings should be initiated immediately. When any student is kept out of

school longer than five consecutive days for noncompliance, the school nurse must notify the local Regional Health Officer (RHO) for the NMDOH.

- Children who are younger than five years of age and who attend childcare or early childhood development programs must comply with the [NM Childcare/Pre-School/School Entry Immunization Requirements](#).
- For immunization questions, some available resources include:
 - CDC's Epidemiology and Prevention of Vaccine-Preventable Diseases – [The Pink Book](#).
 - NMDOH's [Immunization – Rules, Regulations & Protocols](#).
 - The School Health Advocate (SHA) assigned to your respective Public Health Region.
 - The local Public Health Office for your County.
 - NMDOH's [Gatekeeper Training](#) on assessment of student immunization records for school personnel.

School and Community-Based Immunization Outreach Clinics

School nurses may be involved in coordinating or assisting with on-site school and community-based immunization activities, outreach clinics, or PODs. Dependent upon available staff and resources, partnering in these activities usually occurs between the School Nurse and the Public Health Office at the local level as well as with the Immunization Program at the state level. Schools are encouraged to participate with other outside entities (e.g., Albertsons, Walgreens, Smiths, etc.) that can provide mass vaccination clinics during flu season.

Vaccine for Children Providers (VFC)

Several schools and school districts in New Mexico are Vaccines for Children (VFC) Providers. These school-based sites not only make it easier for children to receive their scheduled immunizations and prevent parents from missing work time to take the child to the doctor, but also contribute to improved immunization rates in New Mexico. Schools are encouraged to become independent Vaccines for Children (VFC) providers and receive vaccines for their school-based health or immunization clinics **at no cost** from the VFC Program. Contact the VFC Program Manager, Lynne Padilla, to start the application process: lynne.padilla-truji@state.nm.us.

Physician Coverage and Standing Orders

School- and community-based immunization projects supported by the NMDOH Immunization Program are considered Public Health clinics. As such, it is not required that a licensed physician be on the premises when immunizations are being administered by a licensed nurse, pharmacist, or EMT. This clarification was issued by the NM Secretary of Health and DOH Chief Medical Officer in 1996. However, it is required that all School Nurses and School VFC providers follow the Regional Health Officers and the Public Health Divisions Medical Director Standing Order for Administration of

Immunizations ([Chapter 15](#) in this manual) and the NM Department of Health [Immunization – Rules, Regulations & Protocols](#). It is also suggested that the School Nurse notify the local Public Health Office, Regional Health Officer (RHO), or School Health Advocate when engaging in any school-based immunization clinic activities.

Documentation

Immunization Documentation

School Immunization forms are downloadable on the NM Immunization Program's web site for school nurses whose schools/districts are VFC providers. These forms, the [School Immunization Consent Form - English](#) and [School Immunization Consent Form - Spanish](#), must be used to obtain consent and provide documentation of vaccines administered. The consent was specially designed for schools so it may be used to consent to a series of vaccinations. The immunizations needed must be identified for the parents' or guardians' information. A current Vaccine Information Statement (VIS) for each vaccination needed must accompany the consent form. The VIS date should be filled out on the form as the date the sheets were sent home to the parent or guardian. The signed immunization consent will also be used as consent to enter students' information and establish an immunization record in the NM Statewide Immunization Information System known as NMSIIS. The most up-to-date versions of the [VIS sheets](#) are always available on the CDC website.

New Mexico Statewide Immunization Information System

The New Mexico Statewide Immunization Information System (NMSIIS) is New Mexico's web-based registry of all vaccinations administered in New Mexico. NMSIIS should be the central depository for immunization records from birth to death. NMSIIS includes a school module that can be used to track a student's immunization history and track vaccine exemptions for the student population. All schools (public and private) using the NMSIIS school module can use it to produce reports needed for this mandatory school immunization compliance reporting. A [NMSIIS Quick Reference Guide](#) helps school nurses effectively use NMSIIS.

Nurses who want to use NMSIIS may obtain access by completing the NMSIIS Read Only [Training](#) located on our website. After the training is completed, the nurse will be contacted by a NMSIIS staff member with their username and password.

Foreign Language Vaccine-Related Terms

Many immunization records come from outside the USA.

The [Pink Book \(Epidemiology of Vaccine Preventable Diseases | CDC\)](#) has foreign vaccine tables to assist with interpretations from other countries. [The Pink Book](#) can answer almost any question related

to immunizations.

Primary Editors: Crista Pierce, SW SHA and Anna Pentler, NMIC Executive Director

Secondary Editor: Katherine LaRose, NE SHA