Early childhood services and immunisation requirements

Why have these requirements been introduced?
On 1 July 2019, changes to the South Australian Public Health Act 2011 (the Act) came into effect, allowing the Chief Public Health Officer to exclude susceptible children from early childhood services in the event of an outbreak or possible outbreak of a vaccine preventable disease.

From 1 January 2020, the Act requires early childhood services to keep a copy of all immunisation records provided for each child enrolled in or attending that service and for the period of the child’s enrolment.

This is because a rapid response is required to prevent the spread of a vaccine preventable disease in an early childhood service, which is why services need to have current immunisation records on site and able to be provided to the Chief Public Health Officer within 24 hours when requested.

These are South Australian legislation changes and are not related to the Commonwealth government No Jab No Pay legislation.

What is an early childhood service?
For the purposes of this legislation an early childhood service is a service that provides the education and/or care of children under the age of 6 years, such as childcare, family day care, pre-school, kindergarten and early learning centres, including early childhood services provided at primary school sites.

Services such as babysitting, playgroups, childminding or services comprising out of school care are excluded from the legislation.

Who must supply immunisation records?
The early childhood services must request that the parent or legal guardian of the child supplies approved immunisation records for their child.

What is an approved immunisation record?
For most children an approved immunisation record will be an extract from the Australian Immunisation Register called an immunisation history statement. The immunisation history statement is a record of immunisations given and recorded on the Australian Immunisation Register, as well as any approved exemptions. It contains a statement as to whether or not the child is up-to-date with immunisations.

In a few special circumstances, a certificate from the Chief Public Health Officer or a document approved by the Chief Public Health Officer will be required.

DOES NOT INCLUDE: a letter from a doctor, South Australian Child Health and Development Record (the “Blue Book”) or an overseas immunisation record.
Early childhood service providers – Frequently Asked Questions

When do approved immunisation records need to be provided?
The early childhood service must request that the parent or legal guardian of a child who is enrolled or attends early childhood services provide the service with approved current immunisation records at the below times:

- at the time of the child’s enrolment for the provision of the service
- after the child turns 7 months of age but before the child turns 9 months of age
- after the child turns 13 months of age but before the child turns 15 months of age
- after the child turns 19 months of age but before the child turns 21 months of age
- after the child turns 4 years and 2 months of age but before child turns 4 years 8 months of age.

How do parents or legal guardians get an immunisation history statement?
Immunisation history statements can be accessed by

- Medicare online account through myGov
- Express Plus Medicare mobile app (if they have an existing MyGov account)
- Contacting the Australian Immunisation Register general enquiries line on 1800 653 809 and requesting a statement to be posted to them.

What happens if parents or legal guardians refuse or claim they are unable to provide a child’s immunisation record?
Early childhood service providers must request and take reasonable steps to ensure that the parent or legal guardian of each child enrolled or attending the premises provides the immunisation records for their child. This process must be documented.

Maximum penalties of $2,500 can apply to the early childhood service.

What is the process for children born overseas?
Overseas immunisation records are not approved immunisation records for the purpose of this legislation and must not be accepted directly from a parent or legal guardian. Their child’s immunisation records need to be recorded on the Australian Immunisation Register by an immunisation provider.

Once the child’s immunisation records have been updated on the Australian Immunisation Register, the parent can access an immunisation history statement.

Direct those that require their immunisation records to be translated to the Australian Government, Free Translation Services website. They will need to complete the online application. The Free Translating Service can be used by most permanent and some temporary residents. All fields must be completed in English. If an interpreter is required to complete the application, they can contact the National Translating and Interpreting Service on 131 450.

For those that are not eligible for the Free Translating Service, there are a number of accredited translator or interpreter services available. The National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters webpage lists these services.

A copy of the translated immunisation should then be taken to their immunisation provider for records to be uploaded.
Early childhood service providers – Frequently Asked Questions

How should early childhood services collect and manage immunisation records?

Early childhood services may need to contact their approved provider, owner/operator or governing body if further assistance relating to the record management process for their service is required.

What do early childhood services need to do with the records?

Early childhood services are required to retain the provided immunisation records during the time the child attends the service in accordance with their records management processes. The records are required to be provided to the Chief Public Health Officer during an outbreak (or risk of an outbreak) of a vaccine preventable disease, on request.

What happens in the event of an outbreak of a vaccine preventable disease?

In the event of an outbreak of a vaccine preventable disease, or the risk of a vaccine preventable disease, the Chief Public Health Officer (or delegate) may request the early childhood service provider to:

> Provide the names and date of birth of children enrolled, or children who routinely attend the service
> Provide immunisation records relating to each child
> Provide parent or guardian contact details for each child.

Early childhood service providers must be able to provide the above details within 24 hours of a request from the Chief Public Health Officer (or delegate).

This will enable the Chief Public Health Officer (or delegate) to review the immunisation status of children at the service and to exclude any child at risk of contracting the vaccine preventable disease.

Do early childhood services need to interpret the immunisation records or the National Immunisation Program Childhood Schedule?

No. Early childhood services will not be required to know or interpret the National Immunisation Program childhood schedule, or provide medical or immunisation advice to parents/guardians.

Parents should be directed to their immunisation provider for any assistance.

What is meant by a current immunisation record?

An immunisation history statement provided to the early childhood service must be extracted from the Australian Immunisation Register no earlier than one month prior to a child’s enrolment or within the specified age ranges.

Documentation approved by the Chief Public Health Officer will include specific date/s for which the record is valid.
Early childhood services will be required to check the date the immunisation history statement was downloaded. See the example below highlighting the immunisation history statement “as at” date.

More information
> www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/immunisation

For more information
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