

2011 Annual Review of Childhood Immunization Requirements

Section 32.1-46 F of the Code of Virginia requires the State Board of Health to perform an annual review of the childhood immunization requirements specified in §32.1-46. This section of the Code, effective July 1, 2006, requires that children be immunized in accordance with the immunization schedule developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices, the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Academy of Family Physicians (*Recommended Childhood and Adolescent Immunization Schedule*). Also, this section states that vaccines required for school and day care attendance are those contained in the State Board of Health's *Regulations for the Immunization of School Children (Regulations)* and specifies those vaccines, at a minimum, that must be required by the *Regulations*.

Since the last review in 2010, none of the recent recommendations incorporated into the immunization schedule would necessitate that revisions be made in the vaccines required for school and day care attendance as contained in the *Regulations*.

As noted in the 2010 review, a recommendation was made for all children older than 6 months of age to receive seasonal influenza vaccine annually and was incorporated into the 2010 *Recommended Childhood and Adolescent Immunization Schedule*. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, rates of influenza infection are highest among children. Infection also has substantial adverse impacts among children and their contacts, including increased school absenteeism and parental absence from work. Children less than 5 years of age are at higher risk for complications, hospitalizations, and deaths. Requiring age-appropriate vaccines for school-age children has proven to reduce the morbidity and mortality associated with vaccine-preventable disease. Adding influenza vaccine to the requirements for school entry in Virginia has the potential to be an additional preventive mechanism. However, only two states in the US (New Jersey and Connecticut) currently have such mandates, and evidence regarding the effectiveness and/or success of these initiatives is not available at this time.

The Virginia Department of Health (VDH) estimates that mandating requiring annual influenza vaccination for all school-age children would require a minimum of \$3,690,140 in additional state general funds annually. This estimate is based on the fact that immunizations that are required for entry into school or day care must be provided by local health departments at no cost to the public. If vaccination were required only for children aged 6 months through 5 years, the additional cost is estimated to be \$1,200,524 annually. Children aged less than 9 years of age receiving the vaccine for the first time would require two doses to be protected, **which increases** the cost estimate. VFC funds have been accounted for in these cost estimates.

If implemented, monitoring compliance would also be more complex for school administrators. Influenza vaccination is unique among other required vaccines in that annual vaccination would be required necessitating annual review of the immunization records of all children. As noted above, some children would need two doses of vaccine initially, requiring additional educational staff time to monitor compliance. Because of this added complexity, implementing a requirement for annual influenza vaccination would represent an unfunded mandate to local school divisions. Given the cost and complexity of ensuring compliance, the Virginia

Department of Health will not be recommending to the State Board of Health that any influenza requirement be enacted in the coming year.

As in the past, health departments will respond to the need for seasonal influenza vaccine by improving access to vaccination with expanded clinic hours and clinic sites and supporting voluntary school based influenza immunization clinics around the state.