

Legislation changes: Vaccinations for children and young people in foster and kinship care

Vaccinations

From 23 July 2018, we will be introducing changes to the *Child Protection Act 1999*. From the commencement of these changes onwards, health practitioners may provide routine vaccinations to a child in the chief executive's custody, without needing parental consent. Previously, this was only possible for children in the chief executive's guardianship.

This means that in situations where a child requires a routine vaccination, Child Safety can go ahead and arrange for the vaccination in the absence of parental consent, even where parents retain guardianship. If parents object, or their views are unable to be obtained, Child Safety can provide the carer with the necessary consent to allow a health practitioner to administer the vaccination.

Whether a child is in the chief executive's custody or guardianship is determined by the type of order the child is subject to. For more information on different types of orders and what it means for custody and guardianship, refer to the Foster and Kinship Carer Handbook.

Where a child is subject to a temporary assessment order, a temporary custody order, a court assessment order, or an interim or procedural order, it is unlikely vaccinations will be sought during this short time. However, in the event a vaccination is required, Child Safety will obtain the parent's consent or provide the carer with consent for the vaccination.

Where a child is placed under a Child Protection Care Agreement or an Assessment Care Agreement, parental consent will still be required for vaccinations.

If a child who is subject to one of these agreements requires an emergent vaccination like tetanus, attempts will be made to obtain the parents' consent. If the parents' consent cannot be obtained, Child Safety will request the emergent vaccination and the medical practitioner will determine whether to administer the vaccination.

Communication with parents

When a child or young person enters care, Child Safety will seek information about the child's immunisations and obtain consent for any required vaccination from the parents of a child in the chief executive's custody.

Where parents do not consent to the vaccination, discussion will occur to understand the views of the parents. However, where recommended by a medical practitioner, the Senior Team Leader or Manager may provide consent for the vaccination to occur.

What is the role of carer?

Child Safety will provide carers with an immunisation consent form where relevant. The form will be signed by the child's parents or the Senior Team Leader or Manager.

As is already the case for children in the chief executive's guardianship, carers are authorised, through the Authority to Care - Guardianship to the Chief Executive form, to make immunisation arrangements and the parents' consent is not required.

Where the immunisation provider requires a signed consent form, the carer or care

service staff will attach the Authority to Care – Guardianship to the Chief Executive Form, as this provides authority to arrange for the child's immunisation.

What do Child Safety staff need to do?

Child Safety staff will need to work with parents and carers to ensure that children and young people in the chief executive's guardianship and custody receive vaccinations in accordance with the immunisation schedule.

The Child Safety Practice Manual will be updated to provide Child Safety staff with up to date procedures about these changes.

For more information

Further information about the schedule of vaccinations is available on the Queensland Government website or at: <https://www.health.qld.gov.au/clinical-practice/guidelines-procedures/diseases-infection/immunisation/schedule>.