

Philadelphia Immunization Program

SPECIAL DELIVERY

The Philadelphia Department of Public Health
Division of Disease Control

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March 1st, 2012

VFC Vaccine Storage and Handling Policy Updates

- Use VFC temp logs for monitoring vaccine storage
- “Dorm-style” refrigerators not permitted
- Alarm systems advised for providers storing large vaccine quantities

VFC temp logs

The VFC Temperature Log forms (°F and °C) are available on the VFC webpage of the Immunization Program website at <https://kids.phila.gov/vfc.aspx> Please incorporate these into your practice’s routines for monitoring vaccine temperatures. Temperature logs must be maintained for ALL refrigerators and freezers used to store vaccines. If your practice has multiple refrigerators, please make sure each temp log for each refrigerator is properly labeled (for example: “Nurses’ station refrigerator” or “Refrigerator 1” and “Refrigerator 2,” etc.). When completing temperature logs please include the initials of the person taking the temperature as well as the time the temperature is recorded. And remember, it is not acceptable to pre-fill initials or times temperatures are recorded.

Any temperatures recorded out of acceptable range should immediately be reported to the VFC Program, and immediate action – as approved by the VFC Program – should be taken to store the vaccines under appropriate conditions. Any actions taken must be documented.

Temperature logs must be submitted with every VFC vaccine order. The temperature logs must contain daily recorded temperatures **since your last order**.

Dorm-style vaccine storage units are not permitted

‘Dorm-style’ refrigerators are not permitted for VFC vaccine storage, according to CDC federal regulations. Dorm style units are storage units with a freezer enclosed inside the refrigerator. VFC providers must not use any dorm-style units and must immediately replace any dorm-style units that are currently being used to store VFC.

Two types of vaccine storage units are acceptable:

- 1) A refrigerator with a freezer compartment that has a separate exterior door and separate refrigerator/freezer temperature dials

OR

2) Stand-alone refrigerators and freezers

The refrigerator(s) or freezer(s) used for vaccine storage must:

- Be able to maintain required vaccine storage temperatures year-round
- Be large enough to hold inventory in the inner-compartment and allow air space to flow between vaccines
- Have a working thermometer stored in each freezer and refrigerator compartment

The refrigerator model must be large enough to properly store a 4-6-week vaccine supply at the busiest time of year, making sure to consider the larger volume of vaccine during flu season, and also leaving room for water bottles in the refrigerator.

Dorm-style units are not acceptable for vaccine storage because they cannot reliably maintain temperatures within ranges required to store vaccine safely. In particular, dorm-style refrigerators greatly increase the risk of spoiled refrigerated vaccine through exposure to freezing temperatures.

Alarm systems recommended for large volume vaccine storage

Providers who store over \$15,000 worth of VFC vaccines in their storage units should invest in an alarm system that monitors the unit 24 hours a day and notifies the provider of any fluctuation in temperature outside of the recommended range. If an alarm system is not used, these providers will be held accountable for reimbursement of wasted vaccines as a result of any event causing out-of-range temperatures (power outage, doors left open, refrigeration unit malfunction, etc). Providers storing larger quantities of VFC vaccine are advised to prevent costly losses by investing in such an alarm system.

VFC providers still must maintain paper temperature logs for vaccine storage units equipped with an alarm system. This allows for backup should the electronic system fail.

Philadelphia VFC understands that replacing your current refrigerator/freezer unit or potentially installing an alarm system is a large financial undertaking in any medical practice. However, the financial risk of having to reimburse for vaccine damaged due to inappropriate storage temperatures is far greater. For example, a full-size household refrigerator with separate freezer and refrigerator sections can be purchased for under \$1000, which is less than the cost of replacing a single box of HPV vaccine spoiled by improper refrigerator temperatures.

For more information about proper vaccine storage and handling practices, call Amber Sterling at 215-685-6650, and refer to your VFC Provider Manual.

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<https://kids.phila.gov/news.aspx>