Philadelphia Immunization Program

SPECIAL DELIVERY

The Philadelphia Department of Public Health
Division of Disease Control

DONALD F. SCHWARZ, MD, MPH, Deputy Mayor, Health & Opportunity / Health Commissioner

NAN FEYLER, JD, MPH, Chief of Staff

CAROLINE C. JOHNSON, MD, Director, Division of Disease Control

March 6, 2013

Vaccine Storage & Handling Update

- New CDC vaccine storage & handling recommendations
- Dorm-style vaccine storage units are not permitted
- Vaccine storage & handling resources

New CDC vaccine storage & handling recommendations

The CDC has released new recommendations for vaccine storage & handling. These recommendations will eventually become requirements. A specific timeline for when these changes will become mandatory is still to be determined. Please take these recommendations into account if you are purchasing new equipment:

1. The use of a digital thermometer with a biosafe glycol-encased probe or a similar temperature buffered probe that will more closely approximate liquid temperature rather than ambient air temperature.
2. The use of digital data loggers with detachable probes that record and store temperature information at programmable intervals for continuous temperature monitoring, rather than non-continuous temperature monitoring. Each vaccine storage unit must have a data logger. PDPH will provide one digital data loggers per VFAAR site, free of charge. Additional units must be purchased by provider.
3. The use of stand-alone refrigerator and stand-alone freezer units suitable for vaccine storage, rather than combination (refrigerator+freezer) not designed for storing temperature-sensitive biologics, such as vaccines.

Dorm-style vaccine storage units are not permitted

As was stated in a 2012 PDPH Health Advisory: 'Dorm-style' refrigerators are not permitted for VFC or VFAAR vaccine storage, according to CDC federal regulations. Dorm style units are storage units with a freezer enclosed inside the refrigerator. VFC and VFAAR providers must immediately replace any dorm-style units that are currently being used to store VFC or VFAAR products.

Two types of vaccine storage units are currently acceptable:

1. A refrigerator with a freezer compartment that has a separate exterior door and separate refrigerator and 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 (even during flu season) in the inner-compartment and allow air space to flow between vaccines
- Have a working thermometer (glycol preferred) stored in each freezer and refrigerator compartment

The refrigerator model must be large enough to properly store a 5 week vaccine supply at the busiest time of year, making sure to consider the larger volume of vaccine stored 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 vaccine spoilage through exposure to freezing temperatures. Dorm style units are not allowed for permanent or temporary vaccine storage.

Vaccine storage & handling resources

NOTE: In June 2013, providers will be required to view storage & handling training that is an interactive, web-based module which provides learning opportunities, self-test practice questions, reference and resource materials, and an extensive glossary. Continuing education (CE) credit will be available. More information to be released soon.

You can review all of the CDC updated vaccine storage & handling guidelines and recommendations by reading the latest "Vaccine Storage & Handing Toolkit" at: http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/recs/storage/

Other vaccine storage & handling resources can be found at the Immunization Action Coalition's website: http://www.immunize.org/clinic/storage-handling.asp

Storage & handling resources will be posted on the Philadelphia Immunization Program's new website under the VFC and VFAAR program pages. Look for the updated design over the next couple weeks at: https://kids.phila.gov/

For more information about proper vaccine storage & handling practices, call Emily Gibble at (215)685-6424, or refer to the storage & handling information on the KIDS website.