



Philadelphia Immunization Program *SPECIAL DELIVERY*

The Philadelphia Department of Public Health
Division of Disease Control

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VFC Vaccine Storage and Handling Policy Updates

- Use *New* VFC temp logs for monitoring vaccine storage starting Oct. 1, 2008
- "Dorm-style" refrigerators must be phased out by April 1, 2009
- Alarm systems advised for providers storing larger vaccine quantities

Updated VFC temp logs

The VFC Temperature Log forms (F° and C) have been redesigned, and the updated forms are attached. Please incorporate these into your practice's routines for monitoring vaccine temperatures starting on October 1, 2008. 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.).

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. Temperature logs should be submitted with VFC vaccine orders **only**.

Dorm-style vaccine storage units must be replaced by April 2009

'Dorm-style' refrigerators are no longer 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 replace any dorm-style units currently being used to store VFC vaccine by April 1, 2009.

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

Look for refrigerator models large enough to properly store a 6-8-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 larger 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 the same as the cost to replace a single box of HPV vaccine spoiled by improper refrigerator temperatures.

For more information about proper vaccine storage and handling practices, call Lisa Morgan at 215-685-6872, and refer to your VFC Provider Manual. This resource was distributed to all VFC providers in October 2007, and is also available on the VFC page of the Immunization Program web site: <https://kids.phila.gov/vfc.aspx>

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If you have questions concerning vaccine availability through the Philadelphia Vaccines for Children (VFC) Program, please call Veronica Alvarez, VFC Program Coordinator, at (215) 685-6498. For medical questions, please call Dr. Barbara Watson, Immunization Program Medical Specialist, at (215) 685-6842. Only VFC-eligible patients should receive vaccine acquired through the VFC program.