



MEMO

TO: Prevention Partnership Providers and
Local Public Health Units

FROM: Abbi Pierce, MPH 
VFC Manager

RE: Updated Vaccine Storage and Handling Recommendations and
Requirements

DATE: December 17, 2012

In October 2012, The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released new recommendations and requirements for the storage and handling of vaccine. In late November the CDC also made available the newest version of the Vaccine Storage and Handling Toolkit. The toolkit is available at www.cdc.gov/vaccines/recs/storage/default.htm. The North Dakota Department of Health (NDDoH) is in the process of printing this toolkit for providers. It will be sent to providers with their annual enrollment in early 2013.

The only change that is required to participate in the Vaccines For Children (VFC) Program is that starting January 1, 2013, the use of dorm-style fridges for storage of VFC vaccines or other vaccines purchased with public funds is prohibited. Previously, dorm-style fridges were able to be used for temporary storage of VFC vaccines. Providers who receive vaccines from the NDDoH may no longer use dorm-style units for storage of these vaccines under any circumstances. A dorm-style unit is defined as a small combination refrigerator/freezer unit that is outfitted with one exterior door and an evaporator plate (cooling coil), which is usually located inside an icemaker compartment (freezer) within the refrigerator.

CDC has also made the following new recommendations regarding storage and handling. These recommendations may become requirements for the VFC Program in the future, so as your facility purchases new fridges, freezers and thermometers, please take these into consideration.

1. Use of a biosafe glycol-encased probe or a similar temperature buffered probe rather than measurement of ambient air temperatures, and;
2. Use of digital data loggers with detachable probes that record and store temperature information at frequent programmable intervals for 24 hour temperature monitoring rather than non-continuous temperature monitoring, and;

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3. Use of stand-alone refrigerator and stand-alone freezer units suitable for vaccine storage rather than combination (refrigerator + freezer) or other units not designed for storing fragile biologics, such as vaccines, and;
4. Weekly review of vaccine expiration dates and rotation of vaccine stock.

The NDDoH Immunization Program intends to develop guidance for specific refrigerators, freezers and thermometers that meet CDC recommendations in 2013. If you need to purchase new equipment prior to that, please contact the NDDoH for assistance.

Please feel free to contact the NDDoH Immunization Program with any questions or concerns at 701.328.3386 or toll-free at 800.472.2180.