



North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services
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November 9, 2012

MEMORANDUM

TO: North Carolina Local Health Departments (LHDs)

FROM: Beth Rowe-West, R.N., B.S.N., Head *BRW*
Immunization Branch

SUBJECT: Interim Storage and Handling Guidance—Changes in Recommendations

The purpose of this memo is to notify providers of the changes in storage and handling guidance recently issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and to allow providers to begin to make these upgrades to storage and handling equipment and practices.

The CDC will no longer allow the use of dorm-style or bar-style refrigerator/freezers for ANY vaccine storage, even temporary storage. Effective February 4, 2013, any provider utilizing a dormitory-style refrigerator/freezer for the storage of Vaccines for Children (VFC) vaccines will be required to complete an improvement plan documenting plans for the elimination of such practices. A dormitory-style refrigerator is defined as a small combination freezer/refrigerator unit that is outfitted with one exterior door with an evaporator plate (cooling coil), which is usually located inside an icemaker compartment (freezer) within the refrigerator. Portable refrigeration units are approved for the transport of vaccine or use in off-site clinics but are not acceptable for daily use or long-term storage of vaccine.

In addition, the CDC has also issued four additional recommendations which will provide best protection for private and public vaccine supplies, ensuring the best possible protection for patients. Here is a brief summary of the CDC recommendations:

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;
3. Use of stand-alone refrigerator and stand-alone freezer units suitable for vaccine storage rather than combination (refrigerator and 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.

In order to see the complete interim guidance report, go to: <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/recs/storage/interim-storage-handling.pdf>. Though these federal recommendations are not currently required of participants in the Vaccines for Children program, they will form the framework for future CDC requirements. Providers should begin planning to implement changes based on these recommendations as soon as possible and should review all of NCIP’s storage and handling requirements at <http://immunize.nc.gov/providers/storageandhandling.htm> to protect your vaccine supply and the health of your patients. LHDs may use their Aid-to-County (ATC) funding to implement these changes.

For questions, please contact us at the following email address: imminfo@dhhs.nc.gov

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