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June 28, 2021

MEMORANDUM

**TO: Medical Officers of Health
Associate Medical Officers of Health
Directors of Education
School Authorities**

RE: Routine and School-based Publicly Funded Immunizations for Children

Thank you for your leadership and partnership in supporting the health and safety of students so that they could continue their learning during the pandemic.

The purpose of this memo is to reinforce and promote the importance of ongoing collaboration between public health units (PHUs) and school boards in the delivery of Ontario's immunization programs and to provide you with key messages you can share as part of local immunization programming.

The Ministry of Health considers routine vaccination an essential service and part of preventative health care for Ontarians. Vaccines can prevent illnesses that lead to medical visits, hospitalizations, and further strain to the health care system. Since many of the diseases that routine vaccines protect against are transmissible in settings such as schools, up-to-date immunizations are important in preparation for in-person learning, and as Ontario gradually enters its Roadmap to Reopen.

Public health units are responsible for the provision of immunization programs within their jurisdiction. Given the varied approaches to catch-up for missed doses and planning for routine immunization programming, local engagement and collaboration with school boards is important to ensure the health and safety of students in Ontario. School boards are encouraged to identify a lead who will coordinate with the local PHU's to do this work. Efforts should be made to ensure that parents, families and communities have access to clear and consistent information on immunization to understand impacts and ensure the protection of their children. In addition, it is important that parents, and families are afforded sufficient opportunity to catch their children up on immunizations and missed doses.

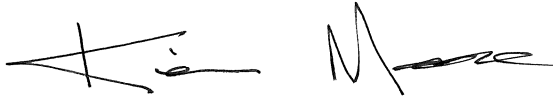
The Publicly Funded Immunization Schedules for Ontario (gov.on.ca) provides free vaccines for children and adolescents to protect them in school, community and social settings. This includes protection from pertussis, polio, diphtheria, tetanus, *Haemophilus influenzae B*, hepatitis B, varicella, measles, rubella, human papillomavirus, and meningococcal and pneumococcal disease. For additional information on routine publicly funded vaccines in Ontario for parents / guardians please visit <https://www.ontario.ca/page/vaccines>.

The following are key messages we invite public health units, school boards, and/or school operators to communicate to families and local communities along with details on local programming for routine immunizations:

- The COVID-19 pandemic and response activities have had many impacts across the health system, including routine vaccinations.
- The Ministry of Health considers routine vaccination an essential service and part of preventative health care for Ontarians.
- The health, safety and well-being of children in Ontario is a priority and requires collaboration across sectors as we work to resume public health programming.
- Public health units will be engaging and collaborating locally with school boards and other partners in the planning for routine immunization programming.
- As we prepare for school in the fall, planning and delivery of routine vaccinations are important amid COVID-19 vaccination for eligible youth.
- For general information on vaccines and the diseases that children are protected from through routine immunization, visit www.ontario.ca/vaccines.
- For details on immunization in your area please contact your local public health unit.

We would like to thank public health units and school boards for their local collaboration and continued efforts in protecting the wellbeing of Ontario students and staff. These partnerships will be increasingly important to ensure safe and healthy environments as we prepare for the coming school year and continue to navigate this pandemic.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Kieran Michael Moore in black ink.

Kieran Michael Moore, MD, CCFP(EM), FCFP, MPH, DTM&H, FRCPC
Chief Medical Officer of Health

Handwritten signature of Denise Dwyer in blue ink.

Denise Dwyer
Assistant Deputy Minister
Ministry of Education