MEMORANDUM

TO: Medical Officers of Health and Associate Medical Officers of Health
Vaccine-Preventable Disease Program Managers

Re: Amendments to Ontario Regulation 645 under the Immunization of School Pupils Act

On September 18, 2013, amendments were made to Ontario Regulation 645 under the Immunization of School Pupils Act to improve the health and safety of Ontario’s schoolchildren. These amendments strengthen your ability to collect and maintain the information you need to fulfill your mandate of ensuring that schoolchildren are protected from vaccine-preventable diseases. These changes also support the implementation of a provincial immunization information system (Panorama).

This memo and attached supporting documents have been provided to inform you of the regulatory amendments and your responsibilities under the amended regulation. The amended regulation is attached and is also available on the e-laws website at: http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/regs/english/elaws_regs_900645_e.htm

There are two effective dates for the regulatory amendments:

**Effective Immediately:**
- Medical officers of health are required to maintain additional data elements as part of each student’s immunization record (see attached), unless the information is not reasonably possible for the medical officer of health to obtain.
- For the purposes of assisting in the accurate maintenance of records of immunization, every person who operates a school is required to submit reports to the local medical officer of health containing records for each student enrolled in the school. This information is additional to that which schools are currently required to report under Section 266(2.1) of the Education Act, and includes the student’s Ontario education number (for the purposes of matching the student record to the correct immunization record).

Further information regarding these immediate requirements and their implementation is included in the attached Questions and Answers document.

**Effective July 1, 2014:**
- The schedule of required immunization in the regulation is updated to align with Ontario’s current provincial publicly-funded immunization schedule. The number of doses and intervals for vaccines against tetanus, diphtheria, poliomyelitis, measles, mumps, and
rubella are updated to reflect current clinical guidelines and recommendations as per the provincial schedule. Additionally, meningococcal disease, pertussis, and varicella are added as designated diseases requiring proof of immunization for school attendance, unless a valid statement of exemption is provided to the medical officer of health. Medical officers of health are therefore required to assess the immunization coverage of students using the updated schedule in the regulation, ensuring that they have complete and accurate immunization records for all students.

- The forms for the statement of medical exemption, the statement of conscience or religious belief, and the notice of transfer from a school are removed from the regulation and made available through the Government of Ontario’s central online forms repository.

Further information will be forthcoming regarding the implementation of the amendments that are effective July 1, 2014. The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and the Ministry of Education will lead a working group with representatives from public health units and schools to determine implementation strategies that best align with local programs and practices. This will include approaches for communication to parents of schoolchildren regarding the updated proof of immunization requirements.

These regulatory amendments will result in better protection of Ontario’s students and a safer school environment by reducing the risk of vaccine-preventable disease outbreaks and improving the ability of medical officers of health to manage outbreaks when they occur. They will improve the completeness and accuracy of student immunization records, resulting in better management of Ontario’s immunization program, a reduced number of school suspension notices being sent to parents, and a reduced number of days that students miss from school. The amendments will also help to improve the security and efficiency of transferring student information from schools to medical officers of health by allowing the use of a consistent process and secure mechanism for transferring information.

Thank you for your continued collaboration and partnership in ensuring that Ontario’s students receive the best protection from vaccine-preventable diseases.

Sincerely,

<original signed by>

Arlene King, MD, MHSc, FRCPC
Chief Medical Officer of Health

cc:  George Zegarac, Deputy Minister of Education
     Directors of Education
     Supervisory Officers and Secretary-Treasurers of School Authorities

Attachments:
1. Ontario Regulation 645 under the Immunization of School Pupils Act (amended)
2. Questions and Answers for Medical Officers of Health and Public Health Unit Staff
3. Memo sent to Directors of Education from the Deputy Minister of Education