

# Frequently Asked Questions

## Certificate of Immunization Status (CIS) and Certificate of Exemption (COE)

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### Certificate of Immunization Status (CIS)

**1. Q: Why is there a new CIS?**

**A:** The state legislature provided funding to the Department of Health to create a new CIS to help parents, schools, child cares, and healthcare providers determine if a child has all the required immunizations for school or child care. The new CIS that is printed from the Washington Immunization Information System (IIS) will remove the need for school and child care staff to manually review the CIS and figure out if a child needs more immunizations. The hard copy CIS that is manually filled out will still require schools, child cares, and healthcare providers to determine a child's immunization status.

**2. Q: What do the PASS, FAIL, and TEMPORARY terms that appear on the new CIS printed from the IIS mean?**

**A:** These terms indicate whether a child is complete or not complete with vaccine requirements for school or child care entry. The terms are defined as:

- **Pass** – A child has all the required immunizations for school or child care
- **Fail** – A child has not completed all the required immunizations and is not in the process of completing the series
- **Temporary** – A child is in the process of completing a series of vaccinations and is due for another dose in the next 30 days.

**3. Q: If a child has a "FAIL" status on their CIS, do I need to print a new CIS from the IIS once the child receives the required immunizations?**

**A:** It is not required that you print out a new CIS from the IIS. You may write in the immunization dates by hand on the existing CIS and change the status, or you can print a new CIS from the IIS, whichever you prefer.

**4. Q: Now that there is a new CIS, do students need to submit an updated CIS?**

**A:** No. The former versions of the CIS are still valid and students do NOT need to be resubmit their CIS.

**5. Q: Can I get the new CIS through the IIS?**

**A:** Yes. You can only print the new CIS through the IIS. [Instructions](#) can be found on our web page.

**6. Q: The CIS printed from MyIR is the older version. Can it still be used?**

**A:** Yes. We are working with our software vendor to update the CIS in MyIR. In the meantime you can accept this older version.

**7. Q: What if a child does not have any immunization dates in the IIS?**

**A:** If a child does not have their immunization dates in the IIS the dates can be handwritten on the CIS or the hard copy of the CIS can be used.

**8. Q: Where can I get a hard copy of the CIS on the Department of Health website?**

**A:** You can get a copy of the CIS by visiting:

[www.doh.wa.gov/YouandYourFamily/Immunization/FormsandPublications/Forms](http://www.doh.wa.gov/YouandYourFamily/Immunization/FormsandPublications/Forms)

**9. Q: How can parents get help to fill out the CIS?**

**A:** Rather than filling out the CIS by hand, schools and child cares can help parents get a CIS from the IIS in the following ways:

- Encourage all parents to sign up for [MyIR](#). Parents can sign up for MyIR to view, download, and print their child's CIS. For steps on how to access MyIR visit: [www.doh.wa.gov/YouandYourFamily/Immunization/ChildProfileHealthPromotion/ForParents/AccessourFamiliesImmunizationInformation](http://www.doh.wa.gov/YouandYourFamily/Immunization/ChildProfileHealthPromotion/ForParents/AccessourFamiliesImmunizationInformation)
- Send an email to the Department of Health to request a CIS. The email is [waisrecords@doh.wa.gov](mailto:waisrecords@doh.wa.gov)

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- School and child care staff with access to the IIS can print an auto-populated CIS directly from the IIS for parents to sign. It may be helpful to print the CIS during registration or other family events.
- Parents can request a CIS printed from the IIS from their healthcare provider. Parents can also ask their healthcare provider to help them fill out the form.

**10. Q: What happened to the boxes for “Documentation of Disease Immunity” and “Verification of Varicella Disease History” on the right side of the CIS? How do we verify varicella history and immunity?**

**A:** The boxes that were required for “Documentation of Disease Immunity” and “Verification of varicella disease history” were removed and made into columns on the vaccine table on the CIS printed from the IIS. Varicella history and positive titers will auto-populate on the CIS from the IIS. Auto-populated varicella history and titers printed from the IIS are considered provider verified and **will not** need a healthcare provider signature. However, a signed lab report documenting positive titers is still required.

If the **hard copy CIS** is being used, a “Documentation of Disease Immunity” box can be found on the right side of the form. Both varicella history and positive titers must be filled out and signed by a healthcare provider on the hard copy CIS.

**11. Q: If I print the CIS from the IIS and it shows that a student had a history of varicella (chickenpox), does a healthcare provider need to sign the CIS?**

**A:** No. If the CIS printed from the IIS has a date in the disease column for varicella or “HISTORY” or a date printed in the history column for varicella, then verification has already occurred. No signature (or further action) is needed.

**12. Q: There used to be three options to verify a history of varicella, what are the current options?**

**A:** Verification of varicella disease can happen in three ways:

- **First option:** Varicella disease history is verified by the IIS. If varicella history is in the IIS, the “History” or “Disease” column will populate a date or the word “HISTORY” in the varicella row and will print on the CIS.
- **Second option:** Disease verified by a healthcare provider (HCP). The healthcare provider can check the verification box and sign the hardcopy CIS or parents can provide a signed note from the HCP. School staff would write-in provider verification on the CIS.
- **Third option:** If school staff finds verification of varicella disease in the IIS, staff can add this information to the CIS.

Parent verification of chickenpox disease is no longer accepted for students in kindergarten-12<sup>th</sup> grade. Some exceptions may apply. See the current school requirement charts for more information:

<https://www.doh.wa.gov/CommunityandEnvironment/Schools/Immunization/VaccineRequirements>

**13. Q: I know that healthcare providers enter lab evidence of immunity in the IIS. Can I use this information to update the CIS rather than getting a healthcare provider signature and copy of a lab report?**

**A:** School staff historically haven’t been able to see immunity information in the IIS. With the new CIS, if lab evidence of immunity is documented in the IIS, it will now print on the CIS under the “Positive Titer” column. This is a valid verification of immunity and a healthcare provider signature is not needed. However, a signed lab report is still required.

**14. Q: Does a healthcare provider need to sign the CIS?**

**A:** Washington State law allows for parents/guardians to self-report immunizations required for school or child care entry. Parents must sign the CIS at the top. A provider signature for positive titers is not required if the CIS is printed from the IIS. This CIS is considered to be medically validated by the IIS.

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However, a provider signature may still be required on the **hard copy of the CIS**. The only times that a healthcare provider must sign a **hard copy CIS** are:

1. If the healthcare provider verifies that the student has had varicella (chickenpox) disease.
2. If the healthcare provider documents immunity by blood test to one of the vaccine-preventable diseases.

**15. Q: Should I start using the new CIS now or wait for school year 2017-2018?**

**A:** Schools should start using the new CIS for *all new students* entering their school and include the new CIS in new student registration packets. Child care facilities can start using the new CIS for *all new children* entering their facility.

**16. Q: Do I need to get a CIS from parents/guardians every year, even if they already have one on file?**

**A:** No. The CIS on file is sufficient and there is no need to get a new CIS every year. If more immunizations are added, then update the form already on file.

**17. Q: There are two places for a parent signature. Why does a parent have to sign in two places on the new CIS?**

**A:** A parent needs to sign in the two separate places because the spaces serve two different purposes. One of the signature lines is required to verify that the information on the CIS form is correct, while the other signature line is to give permission to enter immunizations into the IIS. This is a new feature for school staff with access to the School Module.

**18. Q: Do I need parent verbal or written consent every time that I add immunizations to the CIS obtained from the IIS? How about immunizations from a clinic?**

**A:** No, you don't need to get parent consent to update the CIS if you find additional immunizations in the IIS or if you get immunization information from a clinic. In the past, the Department of Health required parent consent every time school or child care staff added missing immunizations to the CIS. We recently got guidance from our attorney that parent consent is **not** necessary. We removed the consent box that staff used for documenting parent consent.

**19. Q: All vaccines are listed on the CIS, not just those required for school attendance. Must schools have all vaccine records on the CIS, even if the vaccine is not required for school attendance?**

**A:** No. All routinely recommended childhood vaccines are included on the CIS, so major revisions to the CIS won't be needed if and when new vaccines are required. Also, many people use the CIS as a valid immunization record when they move to another state, go to college, etc. We want to make sure all recommended vaccines are shown. Access the current Recommended Childhood Immunization Schedule at [www.cdc.gov/vaccines/schedules/index.html](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/schedules/index.html)

**20. Q: Can you explain the space (on the upper right) for staff signature on the CIS?**

**A:** Many school nurses wanted to document that they reviewed the CIS. The staff person reviewing the CIS needs to check to see if a COE is on file. Since the COE and CIS are separate documents, we added a checkbox for staff to answer "Yes" or "No" to the question "Signed Cert. of Exemption on file?" We put the checkbox near the staff signature box to alert staff to look for a COE.

**21. Q: In the past, schools ordered hard copies of the CIS from the Department of Health. Are there copies of the CIS available to order?**

**A:** In order to save funds and reduce paper waste, DOH no longer prints CIS copies. We haven't sent the CIS to school districts, Head Start/ECEAP programs, or child care licensors for several years.

**22. Q: If I get an immunization record from a healthcare provider, can I staple this record to the CIS or does the CIS still need to be filled out?**



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**A:** All children must have a completed CIS on file to attend school or child care in Washington State. An immunization record from a clinic cannot replace a completed CIS.

**23. Q: Does a student with an exemption need to submit both a CIS and a COE?**

**A:** Yes, the Washington Administrative Code requires a CIS to be on file for all students. If a student requests an exemption to required immunizations, both a CIS and COE need to be on file.

**24. Q: How can schools get copies of the CIS and COE in other languages?**

**A:** We have translated the CIS and COE into 7 languages. Any school or child care can download these at: [www.doh.wa.gov/YouandYourFamily/Immunization/FormsandPublications/Forms.aspx](http://www.doh.wa.gov/YouandYourFamily/Immunization/FormsandPublications/Forms.aspx)

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### Certificate of Exemption (COE)

**1. Q: What are the main changes to the new COE dated Feb. 2018?**

**A:** The main changes are:

- There are now three separate sections for the three different types of exemptions. Only one section (box) should be used for an exemption to a vaccine requirement.
  - **Personal/Philosophical/Religious Exemption:** this box is used if a parent or guardian has a personal, philosophical or religious objection to the vaccine.
  - **Medical Exemption:** this box is only used if the medical practitioner (MD, ND, DO, ARNP, PA) has determined that, in his or her medical judgement, the vaccine is not advisable for the child. This exemption should not be used if the parent/guardian is refusing the vaccine or for a child on a delayed schedule.
  - **Religious Membership Exemption:** this exemption allows a parent to sign the form without a provider signature. The religious membership exemption was added by legislators in 2011 when the exemption law changed. It is intended for parents or guardians whose religion opposes any type of medical treatment by healthcare providers. Therefore it would be against their religious beliefs to meet with the healthcare practitioner to learn about the benefits and risks of vaccination. Parents/guardians who have a religious objection to vaccination but whose children do obtain care from medical professionals need to use the Personal/Philosophical/Religious Exemption box which requires a healthcare practitioner signature.

**2. Q: Now that there is a new COE, does a current student with a COE already on file need to submit the new COE?**

**A:** No. The COE on file is valid. A new COE is not necessary.

**3. Q: When is the new COE effective? Can I start using it now, or should I only use it for students starting in school year 2018-2019?**

**A:** Schools should start using the new COE for any new students. Also, use it for students starting school in Fall 2018. Child care facilities can start using the new COE for new children.

**4. Q: Does a healthcare provider need to sign the COE?**

**A:** In most cases, yes. As of July 22, 2011, parents or guardians requesting a medical, philosophical, or religious exemption must have the signature of a health care practitioner (MD, DO, ND, ARNP, PA) licensed in WA State confirming that they received information about the benefits and risks of immunizations. A provider may also write and sign a letter saying the same thing, instead of signing the COE.

- A health care practitioner does not need to sign the COE if the parent claims a **Religious Membership** exemption. This exemption states that the parent’s religious beliefs do not allow

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any medical treatment. Therefore it would be against their religious beliefs to meet with the healthcare practitioner to learn about the benefits and risks of vaccination. Parents/guardians who have a religious objection to vaccination but whose children do obtain care from medical professionals need to use the Personal/Philosophical/Religious Exemption box which requires a healthcare practitioner signature.

For more information on signature requirements, go to:

[www.doh.wa.gov/CommunityandEnvironment/Schools/Immunization/Exemptions.aspx](http://www.doh.wa.gov/CommunityandEnvironment/Schools/Immunization/Exemptions.aspx)

**5. Q: Does a student without any exemptions need a copy of a COE in her or his file?**

**A:** No. Students must have the COE completed and filed in their record only if she or he has an exemption.

**6. Q: Can I get the COE through the IIS?**

**A:** No. The IIS doesn't include the COE. You can get a copy of the COE at

[www.doh.wa.gov/YouandYourFamily/Immunization/FormsandPublications/Forms.aspx](http://www.doh.wa.gov/YouandYourFamily/Immunization/FormsandPublications/Forms.aspx)

**7. Q: Does a COE expire? Does a COE need to be renewed annually?**

**A:** The only type of COE with an expiration date is a COE with a temporary medical exemption. The COE does not need to be renewed annually. Once a COE is filled out, it can be used for students for the length of their school career. If parents request changes to the COE a new form should be completed.

**8. Q: I see that a healthcare provider entered a contraindication of "Parent or Patient Refusal, Personal or Religious" in the IIS for a patient. Can I use this information to document a personal or religious exemption for a student rather than have the provider sign the COE?**

**A:** No, documentation of a refusal in the IIS does not mean that the parent or patient requested an exemption. It also does not document that a health care practitioner (MD, DO, ND, ARNP, PA) has discussed the benefits and risks of immunizations with the parent or patient. Providers and parents still need to fill out and sign the COE.

**9. Q: I have a lot of questions about the exemption law and how to fill out the COE. Where can I get more information?**

**A:** You can find more information at:

[www.doh.wa.gov/CommunityandEnvironment/Schools/Immunization/Exemptions](http://www.doh.wa.gov/CommunityandEnvironment/Schools/Immunization/Exemptions)

Or email: [OICPSchools@doh.wa.gov](mailto:OICPSchools@doh.wa.gov)