

June 3, 2020

Re: Pediatric Preventative Care and School Health

Dear Pediatric Care Provider,

Due to the ongoing Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, early local and national data suggest a concerning trend of delayed regular pediatric preventative care and chronic disease management among children and families. The District of Columbia Department of Health (DC Health) stresses the importance of pediatric preventative and chronic disease care visits for the health and well-being of each individual child and for the public health of the school community.

Over the past two months, DC Health data indicates decreased pediatric medical visits with a corresponding decrease in the rate of the number of vaccines administered. If this trend continues, overall childhood immunization coverage will inevitably decline. As you know, maintaining high immunization coverage is imperative to prevent a vaccine-preventable illness outbreak amidst our current COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, concurrent Influenza and COVID-19 spread has the potential to cause significant harm in the Fall.

DC Health recommends that your clinical practices focus on increasing access to care and conducting family engagement. Opportunities to increase access include expanding access to in-person services that may have been reduced due to the COVID-19 pandemic and extending hours of well care operations to include early mornings, evenings, Saturdays, and Sundays. It is also necessary to provide all needed immediate and preventative services within a single visit, including as a walk-in visits.

Importantly, your patients know you, and they trust you. Calling and communicating directly with the families you care for will have the biggest impact to have them re-engage with their medical home. If your clinic practice needs additional support accessing resources, such as personal protective equipment, in order to fully care for your patient population, please contact dc.hmc@dc.gov for assistance.

Universal Health Certificates (UHCs), Immunization Records, Oral Health Assessments, and Medication Authorization Forms are the vital ways to meet students' health needs at school. See the Appendix below for the flexibilities and additional considerations for these forms in the School Year 2020 – 2021.

As your clinical sites start having more in-person encounters, DC Health still recommends taking the necessary precautions in social distancing, masking, and cleaning to reduce exposure to COVID-19. For more information, please see DC Health Notices at <https://dchealth.dc.gov/page/health-notice>.

For questions related to school health, please reach out to DC Health at shs.program@dc.gov.

Sincerely,



LaQuandra S. Nesbitt, MD, MPH
Director

Appendix: School Health Form Flexibilities for School Year 2020 – 2021

- The school health team can utilize the previous school year’s Universal Health Certificate (UHC) and Medication Authorization Forms until **November 2, 2020**
- For students who do not have a health form from the previous school year (i.e. new students), they should have completed health forms at the start of the school year.
- Both versions (old and new) of the UHC will be accepted
- Partial UHCs completed via a telehealth preventative care visits will be accepted.
 - The provider should make a notation on the UHC or write a separate letter stating a telemedicine preventative care visit was completed.
 - The telemedicine visit should follow the DC Health April 19th [Interim Guidance for Outpatient Pediatric Providers](#).
 - The school health team should coordinate with the family to ensure the rest of the UHC is completed in a timely manner.
- Providers should notate on the UHC and/or send a separate letter to the school if it is medically contraindicated for the student to attend school in-person secondary to being high risk for COVID-19 sequela.
- As DC Health transitions these forms into electronic documents that can be captured directly from Electronic Health Records, paper forms are available at: <https://dchealth.dc.gov/service/school-health-services-program>.
- Immunization compliance and school attendance enforcement policies are in the purview of the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE).