



DELAWARE HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES

Division of Public Health

Immunization Program

TO: Vaccine for Children (VFC) Providers

FROM: Mayra S. Lacén
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DATE: December 23, 2008

SUBJECT: IMPORTANT INFORMATION REGARDING DORM-STYLE REFRIGERATORS

Dear Vaccines for Children (VFC) program participants:

The Delaware VFC program would like to remind all VFC providers that current program guidelines prohibit the use of dorm-style refrigerators for vaccine storage. A dorm-style refrigerator is defined as a small combination refrigerator/freezer unit that is outfitted with one external door, an evaporator plate (cooling coil) which is usually located inside an ice-maker compartment (freezer) within the refrigerator, and is void of a temperature alarm device. Its temperature control sensor reacts to the temperature of the evaporator rather than the general air in the storage compartment. When the compressor is on, the evaporator cools to lower the temperature in the refrigerator, in most cases to below 0°C.

Dorm-style refrigerators place vaccine at a high risk of freezing. Ideally, vaccine storage units should be temperature-monitored/alarm-equipped stand-alone refrigerators and stand-alone freezers. These units, unlike the dorm-style units, will have an evaporator that is located behind the surface of the walls, the back of the refrigerator compartment or, in most cases in the back of the unit.

While these dorm-style units may perform well periodically, these types of units do not reliably maintain the temperatures needed to keep vaccine safely within the required ranges. Effective immediately, all newly enrolling VFC providers cannot use a dorm-style refrigerator as a permanent storage unit for VFC vaccine, and current providers must phase out these units before the end of the year 2009. By January 1, 2010 there shall be no Delaware VFC providers using dorm-style refrigerators.

One of the main reasons that the Delaware VFC program is taking this action is the rising cost of vaccine. As VFC vaccine cost approaches \$3 billion nationally and over \$10 million for the state, it is essential for the integrity and continuation of the VFC program to ensure that VFC vaccine is stored in appropriate units which decrease the chance of vaccine loss due to inappropriate storage conditions.

Your cooperation in this matter is important to us. If you have any questions concerning this information, please contact the DHSS Immunization Program at 1-800-282-8672.

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