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NEWS

Students may face suspension over immunization records

By Julia Le
Metroland Media Group

Halton high school students with incomplete immunization records could face suspension from school next month.

As of March 22, approximately 590 Grade 11 and 12 students had yet to provide proof they have all the required immunizations, Halton's Medical Officer of Health (MOH) Dr. Hamidah Meghani told Halton regional council Wednesday (March 23).

However, the number of students with outstanding immunization needs has been going down dramatically, Meghani noted.

It continues to drop every day, she said.

We have a very robust system in place, in terms of a call centre we put into place since last week, so we've been getting more and more children immunized and updated and I just hope that by the time suspension does come around on April 6 that those numbers are quite low.

Students who have not provided to the Health Department by April 5, either up-to-date immunization records or a legal exemption, will face a 20-day suspension, from April 6 to May 3, stated a memo distributed at the regional council meeting.

Under the provincial Immunization of School Pupils Act (ISPA), students must have up-to-date immunization records in order to attend school.

As part of its efforts to enforce the ISPA requirements, the Halton Health Department mailed 7,730 letters to parents of the 17-year-old cohort requesting up-to-date immunization records last July, according to the memo.

Immunization clinics were offered between July and December 2015 and an online immuni-



zation reporting system was launched in September 2015 to encourage families to submit the information through a secure electronic platform. The form is available at halton.ca/immunize.

In December 2015, another 4,389 notices were issued to parents of the 17-year-old cohort, who hadn't provided the records, the memo stated.

Targeted immunization clinics were then offered at secondary schools last month and additional clinics are scheduled for this month.

Students are required to be vaccinated against diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus poliomyelitis (DPTp), measles, mumps, rubella (MMR) and meningococcal disease, in order to attend school.

An exemption is allowed, if a student has medical reasons or provides an affidavit stating the student isn't immunized because of conscience or religious reasons.

It is also encouraging all families to review their children's immunization history and make sure the Health Department has updated records either online at halton.ca/immunize, by dialing 311 or by dropping off a copy of their child's immunization record to the Halton Region Health Department at 1151 Bronte Rd., Oakville.

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