

**Subject:**Response from MOHLTC: 16-5102 jk

**Date:**Mon, 5 Dec 2016 21:14:21 +0000

**From:**Correspondence Services (MOHLTC) <CSU.MOH@ontario.ca>

**To:**rita@xxx

HLTC2966MC-2016-5102

The ministry wishes to follow-up on your email of May 9, 2016, to the Honourable Dr. Eric Hoskins, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, regarding your complaint to the Ombudsman of Ontario related to information about vaccine exemptions under the Immunization of School Pupils Act. The ministry apologizes for the delay in responding.

The ministry has been in touch with the Ombudsman of Ontario, and wanted to ensure a thorough review of your concerns before the ministry could provide an informed response to your letter.

Your letter to the Ombudsman details previous communication between your organization and the ministry on this topic. A teleconference between the Vaccination Risk Awareness Network (VRAN), now called Vaccine Choice Canada, and ministry staff took place on February 24, 2014, as a forum to express your ideas and concerns about the immunization program in Ontario. A series of follow-up communications took place subsequent to the teleconference and were summarized and forwarded to you in a final document dated January 15, 2015.

As per those documented communications, the ministry responded to concerns expressed by VRAN, related to informing the public about the exemption process on the ministry's website. The ministry also agreed to do the following:

1. Follow up with the administrator of the online central forms repository regarding search functionality for immunization exemption forms.
2. Take VRAN's comments into consideration as part of the ministry's ongoing monitoring and review of its publicly funded immunization programs in the context of continuous quality improvement.

Regarding the first item, the ministry has contacted the Forms Management Unit of the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services, which manages the online central forms repository, to determine what improvements could be made to the search functionality. As a result of these conversations, the keywords linked to the forms have been added to enhance search functionality on the online forms repository and are now operational. The public should now be able to easily search for and locate the exemption forms.

Regarding the second item, the ministry continues to improve the publicly funded immunization program. In December 2015, Ontario launched Immunization 2020: Modernizing Ontario's Publicly Funded Immunization Program, a comprehensive five-year plan to improve the provincial immunization program. Immunization 2020 includes several components focused on improving communications and information available to the public to support informed decision-making regarding immunization.

The ministry will continue to endeavour to ensure that parents are well-informed about immunizations. This includes ensuring that parents are aware of exemption processes.

The ministry appreciates that you have brought to our attention the ministry webpage titled "Immunizations for School Attendance" (found here: [www.health.gov.on.ca/en/public/programs/immunization/ispa.aspx](http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/public/programs/immunization/ispa.aspx)), and that the webpage does not include information regarding exemptions. Since this webpage is outdated, the ministry will be removing this content, and as part of the improvements under Immunization 2020, the ministry will be developing additional online material that will provide comprehensive information regarding immunization exemptions. In the meantime, [www.ontario.ca/vaccines](http://www.ontario.ca/vaccines) provides some key information regarding exemptions.

As part of ensuring that parents are aware of exemption processes, the ministry will continue to work with local public health units with the aim to relay consistent and accurate messaging regarding immunization exemptions.

Related to this, as well as to address the concern in your letter, the ministry has confirmed with Ottawa Public Health that they do not 'mandate' a counselling session for parents. Rather, when they are contacted by parents who wish to pursue an immunization exemption for their child, a public health nurse provides parents with key information regarding immunizations, the exemption process, as well as the risks and responsibilities that a parent needs to be aware of if/when they exempt their child from immunization.

The ministry thanks you for sharing your views and suggestions regarding Ontario's immunization program.

Sincerely,

J. King

Correspondence Services

Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care

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