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Children's Health Services Immunization Policy Statement

Recently, our practice has experienced an increase in patients or parents choosing to decline or delay vaccinations. While our office policy remains that every child deserves a healthcare provider regardless of their vaccination status, we would like to clarify our viewpoint on vaccination and state our policies regarding this subset of patients.

- We firmly believe in the effectiveness of vaccines to prevent serious illnesses and save lives.
- We firmly believe in the safety of vaccines.
- We firmly believe that all children and young adults should receive all of the recommended vaccines according to the schedule published by the Centers for Disease Control and the American Academy of Pediatrics.
- We firmly believe, based on all available medical literature, evidence, and current studies, that vaccines do not cause autism or other developmental disabilities.
- We firmly believe that vaccinating children and young adults may be the single most important health-promoting intervention we perform as healthcare providers and that you can perform as parents/caregivers. The recommended vaccines and their schedule given are the results of many years of scientific study and data gathering on millions of children by thousands of our brightest scientists and physicians.

These things being said, we recognize that there has always been and will likely always be controversy surrounding vaccination. The vaccine campaign is truly a victim of its own success. It is precisely because vaccines are so effective at preventing illness that we are even discussing whether or not they should be given. As a result of vaccines, many of you have never seen a child with polio, tetanus, measles, whooping cough, bacterial meningitis, or even chickenpox, or known a friend or family member whose child died from one of these diseases. Such success can make us complacent about vaccinating and create a false sense of security that these diseases don't pertain to our children in the current day and age.

Over the past several years, many people in Europe have chosen not to vaccinate their children with the MMR vaccine due to the publication of an unfounded (and later retracted) article claiming that the vaccine caused autism. As a result of underimmunization, there have been small outbreaks of measles and several deaths from complications of measles in recent years.

We are making you aware of these facts not to scare or coerce you, but to emphasize the importance of vaccinating your child. We recognize that the choice may be a very emotional one for some parents. We will do everything we can to counsel you on proper vaccinations and current risk of disease in the United States.

In the event of any vaccine refusals or delays, it is our policy that a parent/guardian will be required to sign a "Refusal to Vaccinate" acknowledgement published by the American Academy of Pediatrics at every well child visit. This is our way of documenting that we are respecting parents' wishes and not advocating non-vaccination. A copy of the "Refusal to Vaccinate" form has been attached to the last page of this document for your review.

In addition, due to the additional time and resources often required for the medical workup of an underimmunized child in the setting of acute illness, underimmunized patients are not allowed access to the morning walk-in clinic appointments. As always, our staff will verbally triage your child and schedule a same-day appointment if needed.

The providers at Children's Health Services have vaccinated their own children. As medical professionals, we feel very strongly that vaccinating children on schedule with currently available vaccines is absolutely the right thing to do for all children and young adults unless medically contraindicated. Thank you for taking the time to read this policy, and please feel free to discuss any questions or concerns you may have about vaccines with any of our providers. Please also review vaccine information at the Center for Disease Control's website, <http://www.cdc.gov./vaccines/hcp/vis/index.html>

We are happy to provide additional information, resources, or vaccine package inserts, upon request.

Sincerely,
Children's Health Services

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