



September 1, 2016

Re: Important notice regarding vaccinations in St. Thomas Aquinas Roman Catholic Schools

Dear Parents and Guardians of Grade 5 & 9 Students:

I am writing to advise you regarding the matter of vaccinations within the STAR Catholic School Division.

At its regular Board meeting of May 21, 2014 the Board passed *Policy 21: Vaccinations*, which is attached herewith for your reference.

You are receiving a copy of this letter and policy because your child is scheduled to participate in the school-based vaccination program for the upcoming year.

As per Board Policy 21 please note that there are different consent processes for different vaccines. Accordingly, the consent process for administration of vaccines will be as follows:

- Alberta Health Services (AHS) will send consent forms and related information for the HPV vaccine directly to parents and guardians. Signed consent forms for HPV, in turn, are to be sent back directly to AHS, not to the school.
- For all other vaccines, the distribution and collection of consent forms may be facilitated at the school level, meaning these consent forms can be returned to the school.

Please note that AHS will be mailing you shortly with further information.

Should you have any questions about AHS's in-school immunization program please contact your local public health centre.

Sincerely,

Dr. Troy A. Davies
Superintendent

VACCINATIONS

The Board is committed to serving in the best interests of students' physical, mental, emotional, spiritual and moral health, following the teachings and traditions of the Catholic Church. Our primary mission is an educative one and Christ is the focus of the education we provide.

Education within the Division is regarded as a shared responsibility among the school, family, and church. The Board recognizes that parents have the original, primary and inalienable right to educate their children and are the first and foremost educators of their children, acting as the primary agents of their children's formation. The Board and its Catholic schools are complementary to parents and exist to assist them as they educate their children in conformity with their moral and religious convictions.

1. The Board recognizes the primacy of the role of the Magisterium of the Catholic Church in terms of moral and ethical teaching on issues as they may arise, as communicated by the Catholic Bishops of Alberta and the Northwest Territories.
2. The Board recognizes that parents or guardians are the primary educators and decision-makers for healthcare matters that relate to their children. Parents have a duty and an obligation to foster and protect the health of their children. As a result, the decision to receive or refrain from a vaccination is principally a parental decision and responsibility.
3. The Board affirms that Catholic schools are entities that must act in accordance with their own institutional integrity.
4. The Board recognizes the role and medical knowledge of Alberta Health Services as the provincial authority overseeing the delivery of health care programs and services to Albertans. Alberta Health Services has an Immunization - School Services program. All vaccination programs are the programs of Alberta Health Services and are established, revised, organized, staffed and administered by Alberta Health Services.
5. The Board endorses a true reverence for the gift of sexuality as taught by the Catholic Church and encourages parents to promote the value of human dignity to their children regarding human sexuality. Catholic teaching recognizes that all individuals are created in the image and likeness of God; to that end Catholic education is holistic in its approach to serving the student. While vaccinating against a sexually transmitted infection is not an inherently evil action, this type of vaccination assumes the potential practise of an unchaste lifestyle; a lifestyle that is not in harmony with Catholic teaching. The Board encourages parents and/or guardians to consult with their spiritual director, and healthcare provider as they discern consent to a vaccination against a sexually transmitted infection for their children.

6. The Board will ensure the Division assists with the collection and return of vaccination consent forms in a school setting. Notwithstanding this assistance, for infections transmitted primarily through sexual activity the Board requests that Alberta Health Services distributes and collects consent forms directly from parents and guardians.

7. The Board will ensure that, prior to September 30th of each school year, a copy of this policy will be provided to parents and guardians of students who are scheduled to participate in the school-based vaccination program for that school year.

8. The Board authorizes the temporary use of its school facilities by Alberta Health Services for the purpose of administering its school-based vaccination program in accordance with this policy and shall provide signage designating the space as an AHS School-Services Temporary Vaccination Site.