



Charlie Crist  
Governor

Ana M. Viamonte Ros, M.D., M.P.H.  
State Surgeon General

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September 2, 2008

Dear Vaccines for Children (VFC) Program Participants:

**Subject: Dormitory-Style Vaccine Storage Units**

Our experience has shown that dormitory-style refrigerators place vaccine at a high risk of freezing. Ideally, vaccine storage units should be temperature-monitored, alarm-equipped, stand-alone refrigerators and freezers. These units, unlike the dormitory-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 dormitory-style units may perform well periodically, these types of units are not reliable to maintain the temperatures needed to keep vaccine safely within the required ranges.

Therefore, all newly enrolling VFC providers cannot use a dormitory-style refrigerator as a permanent storage unit for VFC vaccine, and current providers must phase out these units by December 31, 2008. Consequently, by January 1, 2009, there will be no Florida VFC providers using dormitory-style refrigerators.

A dormitory-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 icemaker 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.

The Florida VFC Program is taking this action due to the rising cost of vaccine. VFC vaccine cost approaches \$3 billion nationally and more than \$150 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. This will decrease the chance of vaccine loss due to inappropriate storage conditions.

If you have any questions concerning this information, please contact your Bureau of Immunization Field Staff Consultant or a VFC Program Customer Service Representative at (800) 483-2543.

Sincerely,

Signature on File

Charles H. Alexander, Chief  
Bureau of Immunization  
Division of Disease Control

CHA/cbn

cc: Robert Griffin, VFC Program Coordinator, Bureau of Immunization  
Bureau of Immunization Field Staff