IOWA Health and Human Services

August 2026

Measles Frequently Asked Questions for Licensed Child Care Facilities

What are the symptoms of measles?

Initial symptoms include fever, cough, runny nose, and red watery eyes. Koplik spots (tiny white spots inside the mouth) may also appear two to three days after symptoms first appear.

Two to four days later a rash follows and lasts five to six days. Rash appears as a

- flat red rash (sometimes raised bumps on top of flat red lesions), and
- begins on the head and face and spreads downward to the neck, trunk, arms, legs, and feet.
- Fever may spike to more than 104°F when rash appears.

After a few days, the fever subsides and rash fades.

What are the measles, mumps, rubella (MMR) vaccination requirements for licensed child care facilities in Iowa?

Iowa law requires that all licensed child care attendees submit proof of receiving one dose of measles and rubella containing vaccine (MMR vaccine) by at least age 19 months (the first dose of vaccine is recommended to be administered between 12 to 15 months of age). To be considered valid, the first dose of MMR vaccine must be administered on or after one year of age.

Iowa law allows for a four-day grace period, which would apply to the minimum age of the first dose (i.e., the vaccine can be given up to four days before the child turns one year of age).

What types of MMR vaccine exemptions are allowed for licensed child care attendees in Iowa?

Iowa law allows for

1. **Religious exemptions**

   Religious exemption stating that immunization conflicts with a genuine and sincere religious belief. A notary signature is no longer required for a certificate of religious exemption to be valid. The exemption is valid for the entire length of time the attendee is enrolled.

2. **Medical exemptions**

   Medical exemption stating that immunization would be injurious to the health and well-being of the applicant, or any member of the applicant's family or household must be signed by an MD, DO, PA, or ARNP to be considered valid. Unless the MD, DO, PA, ARNP specifically lists an expiration date, the medical exemption is valid for the entire length of time the attendee is enrolled.

What are the MMR vaccination requirements for staff who work at licensed child care facilities in Iowa?

Iowa law does not address vaccination requirements for staff working in licensed child care facilities in Iowa. However, Iowa HHS recommends that all staff be fully vaccinated.

What are the requirements for persons without presumptive evidence of immunity (including licensed child care facility attendees and staff) who have been exposed to a person with confirmed measles?

In most cases, persons without presumptive evidence of immunity exposed to a person with confirmed measles will be required under a public health order to stay in their home from five days after the first possible exposure until 21 days after the last possible exposure to the person with confirmed measles.

If a person with confirmed measles is identified in a licensed child care facility in Iowa, will attendees and staff without presumptive evidence of immunity in the licensed child care facility be excluded for a period of time (even if they are NOT identified as having been exposed to the person with confirmed measles)?

Yes, generally attendees and staff without presumptive evidence of immunity will be excluded from the licensed child care facility until 21 days after the last possible time a person who had confirmed measles was at the licensed child care facility.

Public health officials will work directly with licensed child care facility officials to determine which exclusions are appropriate. If attendees and staff without presumptive evidence of immunity (who have NOT been identified as exposed to the person with confirmed measles) get vaccinated, they will be allowed to return to the licensed child care facility.

Should licensed child care facilities in Iowa maintain records of staff members' MMR vaccination history?

Iowa law does not require licensed child care facility officials to maintain measles vaccination records for staff. However, Iowa HHS does recommend that licensed child care facilities maintain vaccination records for their staff.

If a case of measles were identified within a licensed childcare facility, public health officials would work with licensed childcare officials to quickly determine staff without presumptive evidence of immunity and ensure all susceptible individuals are excluded. Having these records readily available would expedite this determination.

Can licensed child care facilities in Iowa impose any additional MMR vaccination recommendations, such as denying a religious or medical exemption?

Iowa HHS does not have the legal authority to exclude children who have a valid medical or religious exemption from a licensed child care facility unless an emergency or epidemic has been declared. If a licensed child care facility seeks to impose additional requirements, they should consult their own legal counsel prior to doing so to ensure compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and federal and state civil rights laws.



If measles is suspected, individuals should promptly seek evaluation from a healthcare provider, call ahead before arriving to prevent further exposure. Ensure any suspected measles cases are reported to the local public health agency.