



COUNTY OF POLK
Health Department
www.polkcountyiowa.gov/health

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November 2, 2016

Friends:

For as long as I can remember Polk County Health Department has offered a walk-in clinic for childhood immunizations on Friday mornings. The goal for this clinic was to make available some time for people whose situation made it difficult for them to schedule an appointment with us or their primary health care provider. **But, starting on December 2nd, we will no longer see childhood immunization appointments on a walk-in basis. All appointments will need to be scheduled ahead of time.**

Over the last couple of months a couple of things have changed. First, our regularly scheduled weekday appointments are filled up early each week. People who call later in the week are encouraged to schedule an appointment for the following week or come to the walk-in clinic. Plus, many health care providers and community partners are also referring their patients to the Friday walk-in clinic. And, secondly, as a result, attendance at the walk in clinic has grown to the point that people have to wait hours to be seen and many (as many as half) cannot be seen at all.

This is unacceptable to us. Especially since parents are taking time off from work and children are missing school (often to get the shots necessary and not miss and more school). More importantly, because so many of our partners are encouraging families to come to the health department on Friday mornings, they are arriving with a sense of hope that often cannot be met.

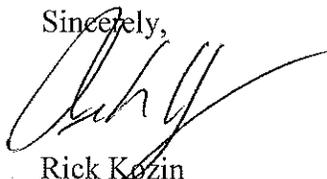
We believe this situation can be better addressed in two ways:

1. It is very important that all of us recognize that many of the families who are coming to the health department (especially at the walk-in clinic) already have a primary care provider (who is not the health department).
 - Please make sure to refer families to their family doctor's office first. It's important, though, to help families understand to say clearly that they need a visit for school vaccines only. Asking to see "the doctor" may delay their appointments.
 - If families don't have a family doctor relationship, please ask if you can give their name to Visiting Nurse Services of Iowa to help them find a doctor, dentist and/or insurance. Contact Lesley Christensen lesleyannc@vnsia.org for forms if you don't have them.
2. We will discontinue our regular walk-in clinics after November 18th. (We will be closed on Friday, November 11th for Veterans Day and Friday, November 25th for Thanksgiving.) Starting Friday, December 2nd, families will be able to make appointments on Fridays (8:30am-12 noon). Appointments will continue to be available on Tuesday (10:30am-6pm), Wednesday (8:30am-4pm) and Thursday (8:30am-4pm), This will allow us to better match demand with our resources and capacity.

To create some flexibility in our schedule for parents who may need an appointment before there is an opening in the schedule we will create a waiting list. This will be sort of a "stand by" list in case of cancellations.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rick Kozin", with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Rick Kozin
Director of Public Health