



## **Meningitis Vaccine**

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to set forth the requirements for entering students, including graduate and transfer students, to show acceptable evidence of immunization for bacterial meningitis prior to enrollment at Stephen F. Austin State University (SFA or University) in compliance with Texas Education Code 51.9192.

### **Persons Affected**

This policy applies to all first-time SFA students who have been admitted to the University and all returning students who have experienced a break in enrollment of at least one fall or spring semester.

### **Definitions**

**Enrolled Student:** A student who has registered for classes during the semester and who is otherwise eligible to attend classes during the semester.

**Entering Student:** Any student admitted to SFA on or after January 1, 2012 for the first time; includes transfer students from any other institution including other UT System institutions., graduate students, dual credit students except those described in Section 2.c. of this policy, and returning students who previously attended SFA and are re-enrolling after a break in enrollment of at least one fall or spring semester.

For the purpose of this policy, the term "entering student" excludes:

- a. a student who is 22 or older on the first day of the semester;
- b. a student who is enrolled only in online or other distance education courses at the University;
- c. a high school student who is concurrently enrolled at the University as a Dual Credit student in Dual Credit courses held at the high school;
- d. a student participating in a Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board approved Continuing Education Program or course that consists of less than 360 contact hours, or:
- e. an individual attending a continuing education program or course offered by the University that does not require approval by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

**Justifiable Circumstances:** Circumstances over which an entering student has no control that prevent them from providing proof of required vaccination or an exception set forth in Section C prior to registration. Neither failure to receive the notice required by Section D of this policy or a claimed general lack of knowledge of the vaccination requirement shall be considered to constitute



justifiable circumstances.

**Online or other distance education course:** A course in which students receive web-based instruction, a correspondence course, or other course modality not requiring students to attend classes or meetings on the SFA campus. A course that requires any face-to-face contact, such as meeting in a lab or for a special presentation, is not an online or distance education course.

**Registration/Registration for classes:** The official process by which a student signs up to take a class(es) offered by SFA. May include online or in-person registration by the student or a university official on the student's behalf.

**Required Vaccination:** An initial vaccination or booster dose recognized by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control as effective for the immunization of an individual against bacterial meningitis.

**Semester:** The first semester in which an "entering student" seeks to enroll at SFA.

**First Day of the Semester:** For the purpose of this policy, the first day of the semester is the first day that classes are held for the semester, including alternative semesters other than fall, spring, and summer.

## **Policy**

SFA complies with Texas Education Code 51.9192, which requires all entering students of Texas institutions of higher education, including graduate and transfer students, to show evidence of immunization for bacterial meningitis prior to enrollment.

## **Procedures**

### **A. General Requirements:**

1. For purposes of this policy, no entering student will be considered to be enrolled at SFA unless the entering student is registered for classes.
2. No entering student shall be permitted to register for classes until the entering student provides or causes to be provided upon their behalf, written documentation to the Admissions Office, or designee, that establishes that the entering student has either:
  1. received a required vaccination during the five-year period prior but no later than 10 days prior to the first day of the semester; or
  2. is exempted from the requirements of this policy as set forth in Section C of this policy.
3. Upon submission of proof that establishes justifiable circumstances acceptable to the Admissions Office, or designee, an entering student may be granted an additional period of time to provide either documentation of the required vaccination or proof that they meet an exception set forth in Section C of this policy. The extension will not extend beyond the 10<sup>th</sup> day after the first day of classes for the semester. Decisions granting extensions will be made on a case-by-case basis and are final and not subject to appeal.
4. Failure to submit documentation of a required vaccination or an exception set forth in Section C of this policy does not alleviate the entering student's responsibility under any



contractual relationship between the University and the entering student relating to payment of on-campus housing or other similar responsibilities.

5. Documentation of the required vaccination or an exception set forth in Section C of this policy must be approved by the Admissions Office or designee for approval before an entering student will be considered enrolled for classes for the semester.

#### B. Documentation of Receipt of Required Vaccination

1. Acceptable documentation to demonstrate receipt of the required vaccine is:
  - a. a document with the signature or stamp of a physician or designee or the public health official that administered the vaccine;
  - b. an official immunization record issued by a state or local health authority; or
  - c. an official record received by SFA directly from a Texas school official or a school official in another state showing the required vaccine was administered.
2. The documentation submitted must:
  - a. state the name and other information sufficient to identify the individual who received the required vaccination;
  - b. clearly identify that the required vaccine was administered to the individual; and
  - c. show the month, date, and year that the vaccine was administered.
3. SFA will accept copies of documentation of the required vaccine that meets the requirements of Sections B.1 and B.2 directly from a school official or another institution of higher education at which an entering student was previously enrolled if the institution is willing and able to provide certified copies of required documentation upon the request of the entering student. An entering student who wishes to comply with the policy by exercising this option is solely responsible for requesting the documentation from the previous institution and complying with any consensus necessary to effectuate the request. The documentation must be sent directly to SFA by the institution.
4. Documentation of the required vaccine shall be securely maintained by the Admissions Office, or designee, and/or Health Services on behalf of SFA in compliance with applicable state and federal confidentiality laws and regulations, including the Federal Education Rights and Privacy Act.

#### C. Documentation of Permitted Exemption

1. Acceptable documentation of exemption from the requirements of this policy is:
  - a. an affidavit or certificate signed by a physician licensed to practice medicine in the United States that indicates that the physician believes that the required vaccination would be injurious to the health and well-being of the entering student; or
  - b. an affidavit using the "Conscientious Exemption Form" from the Texas Department of State Health Services that is signed by the entering student and notarized no later than 90 days before being submitted to the Admissions Office, or designee, stating that the entering student declines to receive the required vaccination based on reasons of conscience, which may or may not include the entering student's religious beliefs. This exemption will not be available, at the discretion of SFA, during a disaster or public



- health emergency, hostile or paramilitary action, or extraordinary law enforcement emergency declared by an appropriate official or authority from the Texas Department of State Health Services affecting SFA.
2. Documentation supporting the requested exemption must be approved by the Admissions Office, or designee, before an entering student is permitted to register for classes.
  3. SFA will not recognize or grant any other exemptions to the vaccine requirements of this policy.
  4. Documentation submitted in support of an exemption under Section C shall be securely maintained by the Admissions Office, or designee, on behalf of SFA in compliance with applicable state and federal confidentiality laws and regulations, including the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act.
- D. Information provided to individuals applying to the University:
- The Admissions Office shall include as part of the materials provided to individual applying for admission to the University:
1. written or electronic notice of the importance of consulting with a physician about the need for immunization against viral meningitis to prevent the disease; and
  2. written or electronic notice of the right of a student, or if the student is a minor, the right of the student's parent or legal guardian, to claim an exemption from the required vaccine as provided in Section C of this policy.

### **Related Statutes or Regulations, Rules, Policies, or Standards**

Tex. Educ. Code § 51.9192

19 Tex. Admin. Code §§ 21.610-.614

### **Responsible Executive**

Vice President for Enrollment Management  
Vice President for Student Affairs

### **Forms**

None

### **Revision History**

September 1, 2023 (original)