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Fact Sheet: Colorado Board of Health Immunization Exemption Rule Changes

On April 15, 2015, the Colorado Board of Health voted unanimously (6-0) to approve the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment's proposed changes to the frequency and process of submitting non-medical immunization exemptions for school or child care.

Background

[Colorado House Bill 14-1288](#) was signed into law May 21, 2014. One of the key components of the new law, which took effect July 1, 2014, directs the Colorado Board of Health (BOH) to create rules about how often a parent or student must submit a nonmedical (personal belief or religious) exemption certificate from required immunizations.

Under Board of Health rule, in order to attend a school or child care center parents/students are required to submit a record showing receipt of all required vaccines or submit an immunization exemption form for personal belief, religious or medical reasons. Until now, exemption forms only needed to be submitted once, unless the student changed schools or child care facilities.

What changed?

The following changes will begin in July of 2016:

- For pre-kindergarten children attending a licensed child care facility, non-medical immunization exemption forms will be submitted following each age immunizations are recommended on the [schedule](#) developed by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP).
- For students attending kindergarten through 12th grade, non-medical immunization exemption forms will be submitted during annual enrollment/registration.
- Schools with children birth through 12th grade will be required to annually report aggregate immunization and exemption information to CDPHE via an online form by December 1 of each year.
- CDPHE will publish school and child care immunization rates annually.
- Additionally, the proposal adds rules regarding the contents of an online learning module to meet the requirements of House Bill 14-1288.

No changes have been made for medical exemptions or for colleges or universities

To support the immunization exemption rule changes and to reduce the burden on schools and childcare facilities, CDPHE will automate and consolidate the exemption process by creating an online non-medical exemption form. Persons without internet access can request a form directly from CDPHE. All medical and non-medical exemptions will be added to the Colorado Immunization Information System (CIIS), the State's immunization registry, to allow appropriate school, child care facility, or local public health agency access to exemption information.

Why is this important?

These changes will help to:

- Provide parents with more accurate, up-to-date immunization rates and data at schools and childcare facilities, and empower them to seek this data out and to make informed decisions about where to send their children. *Learn more about how you can currently request immunization rates at childrensimmunization.org.*
- Prevent parents from exempting out of convenience. Currently, a parent must only submit an exemption form once throughout a child's education career – making it easier and more convenient to elect a personal belief exemption than to provide immunization records.
- **Actively affirm parents' decision of whether or not to vaccinate their child.** We have experienced a pertussis epidemic in Colorado and are seeing the return of measles in the United States. With these environmental changes, parents may want to reconsider their choices, and this provision gives them the ability do so on a regular basis.
- Better assist schools by defining a standardized approach to reporting that minimizes the burden on schools to provide immunization and exemption data, upon request, per House Bill 14-1288.
- Create healthier schools and communities. The best way to keep our communities healthy is to take every step possible to prevent the disease from coming to the school in the first place.

These changes respect the rights of parents to make decisions for their families *and* respect the right for parents to know the level of risk of the environments in which they put their children.

Where can I get more information?

For information about recent and ongoing immunization-related Board of Health rules and policy initiatives, visit the [CDPHE Colorado Immunization Branch website](http://cdphe.colorado.gov/immunization).

For information about childhood vaccines, vaccine safety, and vaccine-preventable disease, visit www.ImmunizeforGood.com or www.VacunadosPorSuBien.com.