Immunization Policy Issues: Focus on Non-Medical Exemptions to School/Childcare Imm Mandates

The National Conference on Immunization and Health Coalitions

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May 22, 2014
Today’s Presentation

- Overview of states with religious and/or personal belief exemptions
- States’ ranking for PBEs
- Impact of PBEs on disease
- Examples of exemption-related policy statements
- Legislative efforts to strengthen/weaken PBEs
Types of non-medical, non-religious exemptions

- Personal beliefs/personal reasons/convictions (7)
- Philosophical/moral reasons (5)
- Other grounds/objections/written objection (3)
- Conscientiously held beliefs/reasons of conscience (3)
- Philosophical or personal objection (1)
- Strong moral or ethical conviction similar to a religious belief (1)
States with Personal Belief Exemptions to Childcare and/or School Immunization Requirements

May 2014

20 states allow exemptions for non-medical, non-religious reasons
States *without* religious exemptions to school immunization requirements

May 2014

5 states do not have religious exemptions
Number and Percentage of Kg Children with Reported Exemption to Vaccination U.S., 2009–10 School Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>2009-10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vermont</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oregon</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alaska</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utah</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Number and Percentage of Kg Children with Reported Exemption to Vaccination

**U.S., 2009–10 & 2012–13 School Year**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>2009-10</th>
<th>2012-13</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Washington (eff 7/13)</td>
<td>5.7 (1)</td>
<td>3.5 (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vermont (eff 1/13)</td>
<td>5.3 (2)</td>
<td>5.7 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oregon (eff 3/14)</td>
<td>5.2 (3)</td>
<td>6.4 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alaska <em>(Religious only)</em></td>
<td>3.8 (4)</td>
<td>4.0 (6-7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utah</td>
<td>3.6 (5)</td>
<td>3.7 (8-9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idaho</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.5 (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michigan</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.3 (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illinois <em>(Religious only)</em></td>
<td></td>
<td>4.8 (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorado <em>(2010-11)</em></td>
<td>5.7 (3)</td>
<td>4.0 (6-7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arizona</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.7 (8-9)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Impact of PBEs on disease

- Exemptors were 35 times more likely to contract measles than were vaccinated persons. *(JAMA, 1999)*

- Exemptors to school imm requirements were 22.2 times more likely to acquire measles and 5.9 times more likely to acquire pertussis than were vaccinated children. *(JAMA, 2000)*

- Vaccine refusers had a 23-fold higher risk for pertussis when compared with vaccine acceptors. *(Pediatrics, 2009)*

- Vaccine refusers had a 9-fold higher risk of varicella illness. *(Archives of Peds & Adol Med, 2010)*

See www.immunize.org/catg.d/p2069.pdf
Personal belief exemptions for vaccinations put people at risk. Examine the evidence for yourself.

Enforcement of mandatory immunization requirements for children entering childcare facilities and schools has resulted in high immunization coverage levels. While all states and the District of Columbia solicits exemptions from the requirements for medical reasons, and all but six states offer exemptions to accommodate religious beliefs, 20 states allow exemptions based on parents’ personal beliefs. Several recent outbreaks of measles, mumps, and pertussis (whooping cough) have been traced to pockets of unimmunized children in states that allow personal belief exemptions. To understand the impact of vaccine refusal, examine the evidence for yourself.


Summary: Recent outbreaks of nonmedical exemptions (NMEs) for children entering kindergarten from 2009 through 2010 and pertussis cases with an outbreak in 2010 in California demonstrate a NME-immune population, in that, if vaccine coverage levels had remained similar to previous years, the outbreaks would not have occurred. The 2010 pertussis outbreak in California has been widely attributed to vaccine refusal, in part because the outbreaks came to the attention of vaccine-refusing parents who declined vaccination for their children.


Summary: CDC documented cases of measles by state during January 1–August 12, 2013. A total of 155 cases of measles were reported during this period.


Summary: CDC reported cases of measles by state during January 28–September 29, 2013. A total of 155 cases of measles were reported during this period.


Summary: CDC documented cases of measles by state during January–September 2013. A total of 155 cases of measles were reported during this period.

Further reading:

Position Statements on PBEs

- Nov 2006: National Assoc of Co & City Health Officials (NACCHO)
- March 2011: Pediatric Infectious Diseases Society (PIDS)
- April 2014: Association of Immunization Program Managers (AIM)
A Statement Regarding Personal Belief Exemption from Immunization Mandates

--from--

The Pediatric Infectious Diseases Society

March 2011

--Position Statement--

The Pediatric Infectious Diseases Society is the world’s largest organization of individuals dedicated to the treatment, control, and eradication of infectious diseases in children. As such, and given the background and rationale outlined below, the society opposes any legislation or regulation that would allow children to be exempted from mandatory immunizations based simply on their parents’, or, in the case of adolescents, their own, secular personal beliefs.

It is recognized that in some states, failure to pass personal belief exemption immunization mandates. If legislation or regulation is being considered in this situation, it should contain the following provisions, which are intended to minimize use of exemptions as the “path of least resistance” for children who are behind on immunizations (whereby it would be easier to obtain an exemption than to catch-up the child’s immunizations):¹

— The personal belief against immunization must be sincere and firmly held.
— Before a child is granted an exemption, the parents or guardians must receive state-approved counseling that delineates the personal and public health importance of immunization, the scientific basis for safety of vaccines, and the consequences of exemption for their child as well as other children in the community who are vulnerable to disease and cannot otherwise be protected.
— Before a child is granted an exemption, the parents or guardians must sign a statement that delineates the basis, strength, and duration of their belief; their understanding of the risks that refusal to immunize has on their child’s health and the health of others (including the potential for serious illness or death); and their acknowledgement that they are making the decision not to vaccinate on behalf of their child.
— Parents and guardians who claim exemptions should be required to revisit the decision annually with a state-approved counselor and should be required to sign a statement each year to renew the exemption.
— Children should be barred from school attendance and other group activities if there is an outbreak of a disease that is preventable by a vaccination from which they have been exempted. Parents and guardians who claim exemptions for their children should acknowledge in writing their understanding that this will occur.
PIDS Recommended Components of Personal Belief Exemption

- Personal belief must be sincere & firmly held
- Parents/guardians must receive state-approved counseling
- Parents/guardians must sign a statement delineating
  - the basis, strength, and duration of their belief
  - their understanding of the risks on the child’s health and to others
  - their acknowledgment that decision is on behalf of their child
- Parents/guardians required to
  - revisit the decision annually with a state-approved counselor
  - submit signed statement annually
  - acknowledge in writing their awareness that child will be excluded if outbreak
- State must track PBE rates and evaluate impact on VPDs

A Statement Regarding Personal Belief Exemption from Immunization Mandates from The Pediatric Infectious Diseases Society, March 2011
Decision to Not Vaccinate My Child

I am the parent/guardian of the child named at the bottom of this form. My healthcare provider has recommended that my child be vaccinated against the diseases indicated below. I have been given a copy of the Vaccine Information Statement (VIS) that explains the benefits and risks of receiving each of the vaccines recommended for my child. I have carefully reviewed and considered all of the information given to me. However, I have decided not to have my child vaccinated at this time. I have read and acknowledge the following:

- I understand that some vaccine-preventable diseases (e.g., measles, mumps, pertussis [whooping cough]) are infecting unvaccinated U.S. children, resulting in many hospitalizations and even deaths.
- I understand that though vaccination has led to a dramatic decline in the number of U.S. cases of the diseases listed below, some of these diseases are quite common in other countries and can be brought to the U.S. by international travelers. My child, if unvaccinated, could easily get one of these diseases while traveling or from a traveler.
- I understand that my unvaccinated child could spread disease to another child who is too young to be vaccinated or whose medical condition (e.g., leukemia, other forms of cancer, immune system problems) prevents them from being vaccinated. This could result in long-term complications and even death for the other child.
- I understand that if every parent exempted their child from vaccination, those diseases would return to our community in full force.
- I understand that my child may not be protected by “herd” or “community” immunity (i.e., the degree of protection that is the result of having most people in a population vaccinated against a disease).
- I understand that some vaccine-preventable diseases such as mumps and pertussis are extremely infectious and have been known to infect even the very few unvaccinated people living in highly vaccinated populations.
- I understand that if my child is not vaccinated and consequently becomes infected, he or she could experience serious consequences, such as amputation, pneumonia, hospitalization, brain damage, paralysis, meningitis, seizures, deafness, and death. Many children left intentionally unvaccinated have suffered severe health consequences from their parents’ decision not to vaccinate them.
- I understand that my child may be excluded from his or her child care facility, school, sports events, or other organized activities during disease outbreaks. This means that I could miss many days of work to stay home with my child.
- I understand that the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Academy of Family Physicians, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention all clearly support preventing diseases through vaccination.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vaccine / Disease</th>
<th>VIS given (Y)</th>
<th>Vaccine recommended by doctor or nurse (if none specified)</th>
<th>I decline this vaccine (initials of parent/guardian given)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diphtheria-tetanus-pertussis (DTaP)</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>oral (after birth)</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haemophilus influenzae type b (Hib)</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>oral (after birth)</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hepatitis A (HepA)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hepatitis B (HepB)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Human papillomavirus (HPV)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Influenza</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mumps, measles, rubella (MMR)</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Meningococcal (MCV)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Varicella (Var)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pneumococcal conjugate (PCV)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Polio, inactivated (IPV)</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Rotavirus (RV)</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Tetanus-diphtheria (Td)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Tetanus-diphtheria-pertussis (Tdap)</td>
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</table>

In signing this form, I acknowledge I am refusing to have my child vaccinated against one or more diseases listed above; I have placed my initials in the column titled “I decline this vaccine” to indicate the vaccine(s) I am declining. I understand that at any time in the future, I can change my mind and vaccinate my child.

Child’s name: ___________________________ Date of birth: _________________

Parent/guardian signature: ___________________________ Date: _________________

Doctor/nurse signature: ___________________________ Date: _________________
Additional information for healthcare professionals about IAC’s “Decision to Not Vaccinate My Child” form

Unfortunately, some parents will decide not to give their child some or all vaccines. For healthcare providers who want to assure that these parents fully understand the consequences of their decision, the Immunization Action Coalition (IAC) has produced a new form titled “Decision to Not Vaccinate My Child.” This form, which accompanies this page of additional information, facilitates and documents the discussion that a healthcare professional can have with parents about the risks of not having their child immunized before the child leaves the medical setting. Use of IAC’s form ensures the importance of the process is emphasized and completed, focuses the parents’ attention on the unnecessary risk for which they are accepting responsibility, and may encourage a vaccine-hesitant parent to accept your recommendations. According to an American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) survey on immunization practices, almost all pediatrics reported that when faced with parents who refuse vaccination they attempt to educate parents regarding the importance of immunization and document the refusal in the patient’s medical record. Recommendations from the child’s healthcare provider about a vaccine can strongly influence parents’ final vaccination decision. Most parents trust their children’s doctor for vaccine safety information (74% endorsed “a lot of trust”) according to researchers from the University of Michigan.

What do others say about documentation of parental refusal to vaccinate?

American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP): “Pediatricians need to explain the risks of not vaccinating and should have (parents) sign an informed refusal document at each visit during which vaccination is declined. A sample AAP refusal to Vaccinate form is available at aap.org/immunization.”

Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO): “To address the risk of VPD, states should consider adopting more rigorous standards for non-medical vaccine exemptions that require parents to demonstrate that they have made a conscious, considered, and informed decision in requesting these exemptions for their children. An example of such a standard might include a requirement for parents to complete a form that explicitly states the grounds for the exemption and requires them to acknowledge awareness of the disease-specific risks associated with not vaccinating their children.”

National Association of County & City Health Officials (NACCHO): “School systems and childcare facilities (where appropriate) should use an exemption application form that requires a parent to sign, acknowledging their understanding that their decision not to immunize places the child and other children at risk for diseases and causing complications. The form should also state that in the event of an exposure to a vaccine-preventable illness, their child would be removed from school and all school-related activities for the appropriate two incubation periods beyond the date of onset of the last case, which is standard public health practice.”

Pediatric Infectious Diseases Society (PIDS): “PIDS opposes any legislation or regulation that would allow children to be exempted from mandatory immunizations based simply on their parents’, or, in the case of adolescents, their own, secular personal beliefs.” PIDS also recognizes that many states have or are considering adopting legislation or regulation that would allow for personal belief exemptions and outlines specific provisions to minimize use of exemptions as the “path of least resistance.” One of the provisions read as follows: “Before a child is granted an exemption, the parents or guardians must sign a statement that delineates the basis, strength, and duration of their belief; their understanding of the risks that refusal to immunize has on their child’s health and the health of others (including the potential for serious illness or death); and their acknowledgement that they are making the decision not to vaccinate on behalf of their child.”

References
AIM Recommended Components of Personal Belief Exemption

- State-developed exemption form must
  - Be signed by healthcare provider
  - Indicate receipt of risk/benefit information
  - Indicate specific exempted vaccines
  - Have space for parent/guardian to delineate basis, strength, and duration of belief

- Parent/guardian must receive & document receipt of state-approved counseling that includes
  - Personal & public health importance of immunization
  - Scientific basis for safety of vaccines
  - Consequences of exemption both to the child & others
AIM Recommended Components of Personal Belief Exemption

- Health department must approve request for exemption
- Exemption form must be signed by HCP annually
- Exempted child (should be) excluded during outbreak
- State must track exemption rates
States with legislation pertaining to non-medical exemptions in 2009-14

- Relax / Add PBE
- Strengthen PBE
- Both

States with legislation:
- WA
- OR
- NV
- MT
- ID
- AK
- UT
- AZ
- WY
- ND
- KS
- NM
- CO
- LA
- AR
- IN
- MI
- OH
- GA
- AL
- VA
- NC
- WV
- ME
- NH
- MA
- RI
- CT
- NJ
- DE
- MD
- DC
- FL
- DC
States that Enacted Legislation to Strengthen Non-Medical Exemptions

- **California**: statement from HCP; risk/benefit info given (effective Jan 2014)

- **Oregon**: statement from HCP or certificate of completion of an on-line vaccine educational module (effective March 2014)

- **Vermont**: must review evidence-based ed materials provided by SHD; annual renewal (effective Jan 2013)

- **Washington**: statement from HCP; risk/benefit info given (effective July 2013)
Number of Exemption-Related Bills by Year of Introduction, Intent, and Status

- Weaken
- Strengthen (did not pass)
- Strengthen (did pass)
Thank you!!!

- Diane Peterson, diane@immunize.org

- Immunization Action Coalition
  - www.immunize.org
  - www.vaccineinformation.org