

California's New Vaccination Law: What Schools Need to Know

In 2015, California passed SB 277, one of the most comprehensive school immunization laws in the country. **Starting July 1, 2016, all newly enrolled children in day care and school will need to be immunized, except those with *medical* exemptions.**

What Has Changed?

Starting January 1, 2016, the following changes go into effect:

- **Parents can no longer use personal (including religious) belief exemptions** to opt out of vaccinations required when enrolling in child care and public and private schools.
- **Children with serious health issues can opt out** by providing the school a medical exemption written by a licensed physician.
- **Some children are exempt:**
 - Students in home-based private schools; and
 - Students enrolled in an independent study program who do not receive classroom-based instruction.
 - Students who qualify for individualized education programs (IEPs) will be allowed to access any special education and related services required by the IEPs, regardless of whether the students are vaccinated.



What About Children Who Currently Have Personal Belief Exemptions?

Unvaccinated kids can stay unvaccinated and still remain in school until the next “grade span,” as long as their exemption is on file **before January 1, 2016**. Grade spans are defined as (a) birth to preschool, (b) kindergarten to grade six, and (c) grades seven to twelve. Students cannot enroll in a new school, change schools, or enter kindergarten or seventh grade **without the mandatory vaccinations**.

For example, a parent can still use a current personal belief exemption for a child in second grade if they remain at the same school they attended last year. Under the new law, the child will be allowed to remain in the same school without vaccinations until they reach the seventh grade. However, the same child will not be able to enroll in a different school without getting vaccinated first.

What Are the Mandatory Vaccinations?

Children must be immunized against 10 diseases: polio, diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis (whooping cough), measles, mumps, rubella, chicken pox, and bacterial meningitis (required for child care and preschool settings). Hepatitis B vaccination is required for students aged 4-6 admitted to California schools, it is not required after 7 years of age. Students entering seventh grade are required to have a Tdap booster (Tetanus, reduced diphtheria, and pertussis).

Stay Updated

The California Department for Public Health will issue more guidance on vaccination requirements in 2016. You can learn more by signing up for our eNews at www.schoolhealthcenters.org.