



Policy Approved by Board of Regents July, 2015

Elimination of Non-Medical Exemptions from State Immunization Laws

Positions:

- 1. The American College of Physicians supports the immunization of all children, adolescents, and adults, according to the recommendations and standards established by the U.S. Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), National Vaccine Advisory Committee (NVAC), and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).**
- 2. The College supports state laws designed to promote all recommended immunizations. .**
- 3. The College calls on states to pass legislation to eliminate any existing exemptions, except for medical reasons, from their immunization laws.**

Allowing exemptions based on non-medical reasons poses a risk both to the unvaccinated person and to public health, as intentionally unvaccinated individuals can pose a danger to the public, especially to individuals who cannot be vaccinated for medical reasons. Physicians should help educate patients and parents about the risks of vaccine preventable diseases and the safety and effectiveness of vaccines. Outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases have been linked to communities of unvaccinated and undervaccinated individuals.ⁱ ⁱⁱ Studies indicate that the easier it is to receive an exemption, the higher the rate of exemptions in a particular state.ⁱⁱⁱ ^{iv} As the number of exemptions increases, the risk of vaccine-preventable disease has been found to increase.^{vi} Exemptions from evidence-based immunization requirements should be limited to medical indications in order to protect the public's health.

ⁱ Omer SB, Salmon DA, Orenstein WA, deHart MP, Halsey N. Vaccine refusal, mandatory immunization, and the risks of vaccine preventable diseases. *N Engl J Med.* 2009;360(19):1981–1988

ⁱⁱ Glanz, Jason M.; Narwaney, Komal J.; Newcomer, Sophia R.; Daley, Matthew F.; Hambidge, Simon J.; Rowhani-Rahbar, Ali et al. (2013): Association between undervaccination with diphtheria, tetanus toxoids, and acellular pertussis (DTaP) vaccine and risk of pertussis infection in children 3 to 36 months of age. In *JAMA pediatrics* 167 (11), pp. 1060–1064. DOI: 10.1001/jamapediatrics.2013.2353.

ⁱⁱⁱ Wang E, Clymer J, Davis-Hayes C, Buttenheim A. Nonmedical exemptions from school immunization requirements: A systematic review. *AJPH.* Nov 2014;104:e62-e84.

^{iv} Stadlin S, Bednarczyk RA, Omer SB. Medical exemptions to school immunization requirements in the United States — association of state policies with medical exemption rates (2014–2011). *J Infect Dis.* 2012;206:989-92.

^v Omer SB, Pan WK, Halsey NA, et al. Nonmedical exemptions to school immunization requirements: secular trends and association of state policies with pertussis incidence. *JAMA.* 2006;296(14):1757–1763.

^{vi} Feikin DR, Lezotte DC, Hamman RF, Salmon DA, Chen RT, Hoffman RE. Individual and community risks of measles and pertussis associated with personal exemptions to immunization. *JAMA*. 2000;284:3145-50.