



# RELIGIOUS EXEMPTION

## WHAT PARENTS NEED TO KNOW

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Immunizations are the best protection against serious diseases. Vaccines are safe and effective and were developed to protect individuals from dangerous and sometimes deadly diseases.

Choosing not to immunize a child greatly increases the risk of getting serious diseases like pertussis, measles, mumps and chickenpox that can cause severe complications such as heart failure; difficulty breathing and swallowing; brain damage; and deafness.

Children who are not immunized can transmit vaccine-preventable diseases throughout the community to babies who are too young to be fully immunized or to others who cannot be immunized for medical reasons. Exposure to any vaccine-preventable disease could be life-threatening.

Actively choosing not to immunize a child by claiming a religious exemption is a parent's right; however, it carries significant responsibility. To protect inadequately vaccinated individuals and the entire community, unimmunized children could be excluded from school during disease outbreaks. This can cause hardship for the child and parent. No exceptions are made, regardless of the circumstances.

Claiming a religious exemption represents a parent or guardian's belief that the family's religious preference does not support immunizing against vaccine-preventable diseases.

A religious exemption can be filed for selected vaccines or for all vaccines. Parents and guardians should indicate which vaccines are included on the Religious Immunization Exemption. The exemption can be obtained from the local health department and must be completed and filed with the school administrator.

It is unlawful for any child to attend school unless the child has been adequately immunized or unless the parent or guardian has signed and filed a Religious Immunization Exemption.

Immunizations may save your child's life.

