



Dear Kansas Superintendents and Kansas School Nurses,

I'm reaching out as a practicing pediatrician; President of the Kansas Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics (KAAP); and Past Chair of the Immunize Kansas Coalition (IKC). As you begin to review enrollment policies and procedures for the 2023-2024 school year, I want to provide information about **current school immunization requirements** and exemption requests, and offer a model exclusionary policy for students who do not meet vaccination requirements during outbreaks.

Immunizations are one of the most effective medical advances of our time, have led to significant decreases in rates of vaccine-preventable diseases, and have had an enormous impact on children's health. Childhood vaccination has been so effective that most of us have never encountered the diseases that immunizations protect against.

[KDHE school immunization requirements](#) have not changed. The COVID-19, influenza, and HPV vaccine are not required. A list of required vaccines is available for your reference at the end of this letter.

While Kansas law has long allowed for medical and religious exemption, more parents are seeking these exemptions for their children as misinformation surrounding vaccination has increased. However, school districts are not required by state law to hand out information about those exemptions. Here is what current state law says:

- To receive a medical exemption, a student must provide *an annual written statement signed by a licensed physician stating the physical condition of the child to be such that the tests or inoculations would seriously endanger the life or health of the child*. All medical exemptions must be documented on a state form and on file with the state and the school. The medical exemption rate has slightly decreased over the last 10 years and accounts for only .22% of the exemption rate in Kansas.
- For a religious exemption, the student must provide *a written statement signed by one parent or guardian that the child is an adherent of a religious denomination whose religious teachings are opposed to such tests or inoculations*. There is no specific form required and the letter needs to be submitted to the school only once. The religious exemption rate has steadily increased over the last 10 years, despite no major religion opposing vaccination.

Kansas ranks among the lowest tier of states in the nation for immunization rates. And the latest [Kansas Kindergarten Coverage Assessment](#) shows that vaccination rates are decreasing, while the exemption rate is increasing. This concerns me, greatly, as for many of the diseases, we must have high vaccination rates to stop these diseases from spreading.

It's important that we are having conversations with families using evidence-based facts on why vaccines matter for keeping kids healthy and in school, while also protecting your staff and the broader community. We encourage you to refer those seeking exemptions to speak with the school nurse or the family's primary care physician to talk through their concerns.

We also strongly encourage you to review existing exclusionary policies for students who do not meet immunization requirements, in case of an outbreak of a vaccine-preventable disease like measles. In case you need it, we have included the Immunize Kansas Coalition model exclusion policy that outlines specific administrative procedural steps that will strengthen the protection of all students against vaccine-preventable diseases.

Please do not hesitate to let me, KAAP or IKC know if you have questions or if there are additional resources we can provide. Thank you for your commitment to the health of our students and communities.

Sincerely,



Gretchen Homan, MD
President, Kansas Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics
Past Chair, Immunize Kansas Coalition

Key Points

- School immunization requirements have not changed. State law does allow for medical and religious exemptions.
- Immunization rates of school-ages kids in Kansas are decreasing, while vaccine exemption rates are increasing. This puts the health of students and communities at risk.
- School districts have exclusionary policies in place for students who do not meet vaccination requirements.
- As you prepare for next year's enrollment, review and strengthen your school exclusion policy for immunizations.

Resources

- [2023-2024 School Immunization Requirements](#)
- [Model School Exclusion Policy](#)
- [Kansas Kindergarten Coverage Assessment](#)
- [Vaccinations in Kansas: A Closer Look](#)

Vaccine Required for School Entry	Vaccine Preventable Disease(s)
DTaP/Tdap	Diphtheria, Tetanus, Pertussis
IPV	Polio
MMR	Measles, Mumps, Rubella
VAR	Chickenpox
HepB	Hepatitis B
HepA	Hepatitis A
MenACWY (beginning in 7 th grade)	Meningitis