

Immunization Law (SB 277)

As of January 1, 2016, there is no longer an option for parents or guardians of students entering schools or child-care facilities in California to ask for exemptions to immunizations by submitting Personal Belief Exemptions (PBEs) or Religious Exemptions.

The only exemptions to immunizations that will be allowed are Medical Exemptions (either temporary or permanent). According to the new law, the exemptions can only be written by a licensed medical doctor (M.D.) or Doctor of Osteopathy (D.O).

The Medical Exemption must contain the following information or it cannot be accepted by a school:

- The physical condition or medical circumstances of the child that is/are a contraindication to the specific immunization(s).
- The specific immunization(s) that are being exempted
- Whether the medical exemption is permanent or temporary
- The expiration date, if the exemption is temporary

What this means for you:

If you currently have a PBE on file for a student who is entering grades 1 through 6, or grades 7 through 12, you do not have to do anything in order for your child to continue attending school.

If you have a child entering transitional kindergarten, kindergarten or seventh grade in California who is not current on their immunizations, you must either submit documentation for a medical exemption for the missing immunizations or your child must receive the immunization(s) before the first day of the school year in August or September of 2016.

Some students may be admitted conditionally if they are in the process of receiving their immunizations and the next dose is **not due yet**. If the dose is past due, then the child will not be able to attend school until the immunization is given.

For the seventh grade Tdap (whooping cough) immunizations, there is no “grace period” and students cannot be admitted conditionally. Students must have this immunization or a valid medical exemption to begin the first day of school (the Tdap requirement has been in place since 2011).

You must plan ahead! If your child needs immunizations or if you have been told by your doctor that an immunization is medically contraindicated, call to make an appointment now. It may take a few months to get the appointment for the immunizations or for the medical exemption.

This new law applies only to the immunizations that are currently required for entry into California schools, and will not be applicable to new immunization requirements.

Parents who do not want to fully immunize their children have the option of enrolling their children in an independent study program with no classroom-based instruction or in a home-based private school.

All California public schools, charter schools, and private schools with classroom based instruction are required to comply with the immunization laws.

For more information about immunization laws and requirements, recommendations and schedules, you can visit this website: <http://www.shotsforschool.org/laws/sb277faq/>