

Colorado improved its school immunization law through the passage of Senate Bill 20-163. Now what?



Senate Bill 20-163: School Entry Immunization, which aims to keep Colorado communities protected from vaccine-preventable diseases through the modernization of school entry immunization requirements, was signed into law by Governor Polis on June 26, 2020. Colorado Board of Health rules will be promulgated in 2020 in order to fully implement the new requirements of the law for the 2021-2022 school year. Supported by the vast majority of Colorado voters, the strengthening of Colorado's immunization law has been a long-awaited policy solution that is even more important now as our communities face the impacts of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

What the new law does:

Standardizes the exemption process & implements an equal effort requirement

- Preserves the non-medical exemption option, so parents with deeply held beliefs are NOT REQUIRED to vaccinate
- Requires the use of a single, state-issued form when electing an exemption
- Requires exemption forms to be signed by an immunizing provider OR for parents to complete a state-issued online vaccine education module

Ensures more accurate, efficient and useful immunization data systems

- Requires all immunizing health care providers to use the state's voluntary immunization system - the Colorado Immunization Information System (CIIS)

Creates healthier, safer schools

- Establishes a statewide vaccination goal for all children, including child care facilities
- Provides additional resources and supports to help schools and communities reach this goal
- Requires schools to proactively notify parents of school immunization rates

What won't change:

- Just as today, no parent will be required to vaccinate their child if they are opposed.
- Just as today, parents will be able to opt their child's information out of the state immunization database, known as CIIS.
- Protected, private immunization information will remain protected and private.
- Exemption requirements will remain the same for students who solely participate in a home-based education program.*

What does this mean for me?

Parents

- There are no changes for the current (2020-2021) school year, even for students who attend school remotely due to COVID-19, meaning all students must comply with current immunization requirements.
- Continue to keep your child(ren) up to date on required and recommended vaccinations, including influenza, and submit immunization information to your school or child care facility at required deadlines and intervals.
- Starting in 2021-2022, claiming a non-medical exemption to vaccination will require an immunizing provider's signature or the completion of an online education module in addition to the use of a standardized exemption form* provided by the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE).

Schools and Child Care Centers

- There are no changes for the current 2020-2021 school year, even for schools using remote learning, meaning schools and child care centers must comply with current immunization requirements.
- The changes required by the new law will be implemented for the 2021-2022 school year.
- Begin to prepare for implementation of the new law by ensuring your vaccine compliance processes are up to date.
- Aim to reach 95% vaccination coverage across your school, especially for the MMR vaccine, to meet the new healthy school standard.
- Stay up to date on the law's implementation by following Board of Health meetings and signing up for Immunize Colorado's communications.

Healthcare Providers

- Continue to encourage your patients to stay up-to-date on recommended and required vaccinations.
- Prepare staff for new requirements, such as the signing of non-medical exemptions by an immunizing provider, which will be implemented for the 2021-2022 school year.
- Prepare for new requirements by enrolling in and/or submitting immunization data to the Colorado Immunization Information System (CIIS) if not already doing so.
- Stay up to date on the law's implementation by following Board of Health meetings and signing up for Immunize Colorado's communications.

*Note: Under the new law, students who solely participate in a home-based education program under §22-33-104.5, C.R.S. and do not attend a public, charter, or private school for a portion of the day will still be able to submit a signed statement of non-medical exemption instead of CDPHE's standard exemption form. Current immunization requirements will remain in effect for all students during the 2020-2021 school year, regardless of any remote learning modifications.

Additional resources to stay up to date:

- Sign up for Immunize Colorado's newsletters and alerts
- View updates on CDPHE's website and look up your school's immunization rates at COVaxRates.com
- Engage in and follow the law's implementation through the Board of Health rulemaking process
- View school district and child care immunization data resources from Immunize Colorado

