

New Personal Beliefs Exemption Requirement

New requirements for filing Personal Beliefs Exemptions (PBE) to childcare or school immunization requirements went into effect January 1, 2014.

What steps are required to file a PBE?

Starting January 1, 2014, a parent/guardian (subsequently referred to as “parent”) who wishes to exempt his/her child from a childcare or school immunization requirement must:

- Consult with an approved health care practitioner regarding the benefits and risks of immunizations and the risks of vaccine-preventable diseases.
- Submit the California Department of Public Health’s (CDPH) [“Personal Beliefs Exemption to Required Immunizations Form”](#) that has been signed and dated by an authorized health care practitioner and the parent to the school.
- Submit a record of the required immunizations that the student has received to the school.

Parents filing a PBE are no longer required to sign the exemption statement on the back of the California School Immunization Record (Blue Card) or the “Personal Beliefs Exemption Form for the Tdap 7th Grade Requirement.”

Why was the process for filing a PBE changed?

A bill ([Assembly Bill 2109, Pan](#)) that was passed in 2013 changed the legal requirements for filing a PBE. The new requirement is intended to help parents make informed decisions that are based on accurate, fact-based information about immunizations.

What students does the new PBE requirement affect?

The new requirement applies to all students under 18 years of age who are: newly admitted to a childcare facility or kindergarten in a public or private school, advancing to the 7th grade in a public or private school, or transferring from an out-of-state school into any grade level. The law does not apply to students with a PBE on file before January 1, 2014, unless they meet one of these criteria.

Can a provider sign the exemption form anytime before the student enrolls in school?

No. The form cannot be signed earlier than 6 months before the student is admitted to a childcare facility or kindergarten, advances to the 7th grade, or transfers from out-of-state.

The date of admission or advancement is the first day of attendance at the childcare facility, or school, not the registration date. For example, if school begins on September 1, the form may not be signed before March 1. Parents who register their children more than 6 months before the start date must consult a provider and submit the PBE form at a later date.

Is there a grace period for students requesting an exemption?

No. The new law does not allow for a grace period. If the PBE requirements have not been met by the admittance date (childcare or kindergarten) or advancement date (7th grade), childcare centers and schools should follow their regular process for excluding students.

Who is authorized to sign the exemption form?

The following types of health care practitioners are authorized by law to sign the PBE form if they are licensed and/or credentialed in California:

- Medical Doctor (MD)
- Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine (DO)
- Nurse Practitioner (NP)
- Physician Assistant (PA)
- Naturopathic doctor
- Credentialed school nurse



The Basics

Starting January 1, 2014, parents who wish to exempt their children from childcare or school immunization requirements due to personal beliefs must:

- Receive information from an approved healthcare provider
- Submit a signed exemption form (PBE form)
- Submit the student’s immunization record.

The exemption form must be signed no earlier than six months before the admittance or advancement date.

There is no grace period.

Resources

- Personal Beliefs Exemption Form and FAQs: www.shotsforschool.org
- Immunization Resources for Schools: www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/ip/schoolIZ.htm
- Vaccine Safety Resources: www.ph.lacounty.gov/ip/providers/VaccineSafety.htm
- Stories of Families Impacted by Vaccine-preventable Diseases: www.shotbyshot.org

Is a new exemption form required for students who had an exemption on file before January 1, 2014?

If there is a record of an exemption in the student's file, a new PBE form is usually not required. A new form is only required if the student is newly admitted into a childcare facility or kindergarten, advances into the 7th grade, or transfers from an out-of-state school.

Can a parent submit one form for all required vaccines for all ages/grade levels?

No. The exemption only covers the vaccines that are required at the student's *current* grade level. Thus, a parent may not submit a single form to request exemptions for all vaccines that the child will need for childcare, kindergarten, and 7th grade entrance.

When completing the PBE form, a parent should only check the currently required vaccines for which they are requesting an exemption. For instance, if a kindergarten student received all vaccines required for kindergarten entry except for MMR, only MMR should be checked on the form. If an exemption is requested at 7th grade entry, only Tdap should be checked on the form.

Are exemptions for religious reasons allowed?

Yes. A parent whose religion prohibits him/her from receiving medical advice or treatment from a health care practitioner may check the religious exemption box on the PBE form and submit the form. A signature from an authorized health care provider is not required.

Providers, schools, and childcare staff are not required to ask a parent to identify his/her religious affiliation or record the parent's religious affiliation on the exemption form.

Where should the exemption form be filed?

The PBE form should be filed with the California School Immunization Record (Blue Card) in the child's cumulative folder or childcare file. Schools may, but are not required to, attach these forms to each other.

Must the exemption form be printed on blue paper?

No. The exemption form may be printed on blue paper to make it easily identifiable, but this is not required.

What information should a provider share before signing the exemption form?

Practitioners who sign the exemption form are required to provide counseling regarding the risks and benefits of immunizations and the health risks to the student and community of vaccine-preventable diseases (VPDs).

Discuss parents' questions and concerns. The best strategy is to address each family's specific questions regarding immunizations. However, you may choose to emphasize the following messages:

- Childcare and school immunization requirements protect students from serious VPDs and prevent disease outbreaks.
- VPDs still pose a threat. Cases of pertussis, measles, mumps, and other VPDs are reported every year in LA County.
- Skipping or delaying vaccinations leaves children at risk for VPDs. For instance, children whose parents refused pertussis vaccines were 23 times more likely to develop pertussis than children whose parents accepted these vaccines.
- In an outbreak, unimmunized children may be kept out of childcare or school for days or weeks, to reduce their chance for infection.
- Vaccines are very safe. Most side effects are minor, such as redness or pain where the shot is given. These are much less serious than the disease itself.
- Receiving more than one vaccine at a time will not overburden your child's immune system.

Share stories that show the impact of VPDs. Share your own experiences and refer parents to www.shotbyshot.org for stories of families that have been impacted by VPDs.

Provide resources to parents. Visit www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/ip to download educational resources, including:

- Vaccine fact sheets about the vaccines that are required for childcare and school entry
- Vaccine safety fact sheets
- A flyer describing the risks of not vaccinating.

Questions?

Visit www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/ip or call the Immunization Program's School Support Services Unit at 213-351-7800.