



## Frequently Asked Questions Vaccine Exemption for Reasons of Conscience

### **Q. How do I obtain a vaccine exemption for reasons of conscience?**

- A. You must request a vaccine exemption affidavit form by submitting a request through the U.S. Postal Service, commercial carrier, fax, or online. Phone and email requests are not accepted. Personal pick up at DSHS is not permitted. ALL affidavit forms will be mailed to you via the U.S. Postal Service. The request must include the name and date of birth of each student for whom a form is being requested and a complete return mailing address.

**Mailing Address:**

Department of State Health Services (DSHS)  
Immunization Unit  
MC-1946  
P. O. Box 149347  
Austin, TX 78714-9347

**Hand Deliver:**

Department of State Health Services (DSHS)  
Lobby  
1100 West 49th Street  
Austin, TX 78756

**Fax: (512) 776-7544**

**Secure online request form for exemption affidavit:**

<https://co-request.dshs.texas.gov>

### **Q. What is the turnaround time for conscientious exemption requests?**

- A. Upon receipt, all exemption requests will be processed and mailed within approximately 2 weeks. This time period allows sufficient time for mail delivery.

### **Q. What information will be listed on the vaccine exemption affidavit form I receive?**

- A. Information on the form will include the student's name and date of birth; a list of required vaccines for which exemptions may be requested; a statement for the parent, guardian, or student, if over the age of 18, stating that the information provided on the form is true and correct and acknowledgement that they have read the attached information entitled The Benefits and Risks of Vaccinations. The vaccine exemption affidavit form must be signed in front of a notary public.

### **Q. How many vaccine exemption affidavit forms can I request at a time?**

- A. You can request up to five vaccine exemption affidavit forms per student at a time.

### **Q. What should I do with the vaccine exemption affidavit form?**

- A. After the original vaccine exemption affidavit form is signed and notarized, you must submit it to the student's school, child-care facility, college, or university.

### **Q. How long will my vaccine exemption affidavit remain valid?**

- A. Each individual vaccine exemption affidavit is valid for two years from the date it is notarized.



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**Q. What happens if I lose the original vaccine exemption affidavit?**

- A. Photocopies of the vaccine exemption affidavit form are not valid. If you lose the exemption affidavit, you must submit a new request following the same procedures used to obtain the first form.

**Q. What if my student changes schools?**

- A. The vaccine exemption affidavit is part of the student's school records and should be sent to the new school with other school records.

**Q. What will happen to the information collected on my student?**

- A. All information included in the request for the affidavit that was submitted to DSHS will be returned to you along with the vaccine exemption affidavit forms. DSHS will solely be able to report on the number of affidavit requests and zip code. No other information will be maintained.

**Q. Does my student have a 30-day provisional enrollment in school while awaiting the vaccine exemption form?**

- A. No. Admission to a school is not allowed until records are produced showing that (1) the student has been immunized in accordance with the rules; (2) the student has an exemption affidavit from immunization requirements on file with the school in accordance with the rules; or (3) the student is entitled to provisional enrollment.

**Q. What is required for school enrollment if I want my student to be exempted from some vaccines but not all of them?**

- A. You will need two different immunization documents: 1) an official notarized DSHS vaccine exemption affidavit for those vaccines that you have chosen for reasons of conscience to have your child exempt from; and 2) a valid immunization record indicating the month, date, and year each vaccine for which your child is not exempt was administered, with appropriate validation by a physician or public health clinic.

**Q. If I currently have a religious exemption for vaccinations on file with the school do I need to obtain a new vaccine exemption form?**

- A. No. If you had a religious exemption form filed at the school prior to September 1, 2003 you do not need a new vaccine exemption affidavit form. The religious exemption on file remains valid. If you are claiming exemptions after September 1, 2003, you will need to have an exemption affidavit for reasons of conscience on file with the school.



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**Q. What should I expect if there is a vaccine-preventable disease outbreak - such as measles - at a school?**

A. When you sign a vaccine exemption affidavit form, you also acknowledge that you understand that your exempted student may be excluded from school attendance in times of emergency or epidemic declared by the Texas Commissioner of Health.

**Q. Does this new vaccine exemption option mean that vaccinated students may be attending school with other students who are not fully vaccinated?**

A. Yes.

**Q. Can an expectant parent request a vaccination exemption affidavit form for an unborn child?**

A. No. Because the child's name and date of birth are required when the vaccine exemption affidavit form is requested, expectant parents must wait until after the child is born to request the vaccine exemption affidavit form.

**Q. Are there other reasons a child/student may be exempted from vaccination requirements?**

A. Yes. A child may be exempted from one or more vaccinations for medical reasons, history of disease, or serologic (blood) evidence of immunity.

### Medical Reasons

The parent, guardian, or student must provide the school with a certificate signed by a physician (Doctor of Medicine, M.D. or Doctor of Osteopathy, D.O.), registered and licensed to practice medicine in the United States, which states that, in the physician's opinion, the immunization required would be injurious to the student's health and well-being or to any of the student's family or household members. Unless a lifelong condition is specified, this certificate is valid for one year from the date signed by the physician and must be renewed every year for the exclusion to remain in effect.

### Serologic Evidence of Immunity to Disease

Serologic confirmations of immunity to measles, rubella, mumps, hepatitis A, hepatitis B, or varicella are acceptable. Evidence of measles, rubella, mumps, hepatitis A, hepatitis B, or varicella illnesses must consist of a valid laboratory report that indicates confirmation of either immunity or infection.

### History of Disease

A written statement from a parent (or legal guardian, managing conservator), school nurse, student over the age of 18, or physician attesting to the student's positive history of varicella disease (chickenpox), or of varicella immunity, is acceptable in lieu of a vaccine record for that disease. (See form at <http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/immunize/docs/c-9.pdf>)