

Overview of Increasing Childhood Vaccinations through Removal Personal Conviction Waiver

Wisconsin legislators are proposing to eliminate the personal conviction exemption from immunizations. Assembly Bill (AB 248) and Senate Bill (SB 262).

This bill eliminates the ability to waive the immunization requirement for schools, child care centers, and nursery schools for the reason of **personal conviction**. The current immunization waiver remains in place if it is for health or religious reasons.

Current law allows for a waiver, if the student or the student's parent, guardian, or legal custodian submits a written statement to the school, child care center, or nursery school objecting to the immunization for reasons of health, religion, or **personal conviction**. Under current law, a student admitted to elementary, middle, junior, or senior high school, a child care center, or a nursery school must, within 30 days of admission, present evidence of having completed the first immunization for each vaccine required for the student's grade and being on schedule for the remainder of the basic and booster immunization series for mumps, measles, rubella, diphtheria, whooping cough, poliomyelitis, tetanus, and any other diseases the Department of Health Services specifies by rule.

WNA supports the elimination of vaccine-preventable diseases. Immunizations control the spread of the more common communicable diseases. WNA would like to see all individuals be immunized against vaccine-preventable diseases according to the best and most current evidence outlined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP).

The controversy over mandatory vaccination, which seems to pit the rights of the individual against the protection of the public, was highlighted with the 2014-2015 measles outbreak that affected both children and adults who were not vaccinated against the disease. Over a six-month period, five outbreaks and 173 confirmed cases of measles were reported to the CDC (2015). Reasons for an individual's decision to not vaccinate vary and include concerns about the safety of vaccination, objections to vaccination based on religious grounds, and lack of urgency or priority, explained in part by the supposition that herd immunity will protect the unvaccinated from infection (LaVail & Kennedy, 2012).

Current evidence and research show that immunizations are essential to the primary prevention of disease from infancy through adulthood. In fact, the reduction and elimination of vaccine-preventable diseases has been one of the great public health achievements in the United States (CDC, 2011). Effective vaccination programs for both children and adults, according to current recommendations from the CDC, are for promoting and maintaining the health of the public. Vaccine-preventable diseases include seasonal influenza, for which annual immunization is recommended. Between 1976 and 2007, the number of deaths annually from influenza ranged from 3,000 to 49,000, with many more people hospitalized due to severity of symptoms (CDC, 2013)

WNA supports AB 248 and SB 262 which removes the personal conviction exemption for vaccination refusal. The other two waivers, medical reasons and religious will remain in statute.