



## Colorado Vaccine Exemption Information for School

While schools require certain vaccines for attendance in Colorado<sup>1</sup>, families may not be aware there are provisions in state law that allow families to utilize vaccine exemptions to delay or decline any or all required vaccines for personal, religious, or medical reasons.<sup>2</sup>

**To claim a medical exemption**, a parent or guardian or the emancipated student is required to submit to their school certification from a licensed physician or advanced practice nurse that the physical condition of the student is such that one or more specified vaccines would endanger his or her life or health or is medically contraindicated.

**To claim a religious or personal belief exemption**, a parent or guardian or the emancipated student is required to submit to their school a signed statement that the student is an adherent to a religious belief or personal belief opposed to immunizations. Colorado's health department recommends that religious and personal belief exemption letters include the type of exemption being claimed, the student's full name, student's age or date of birth, the date the exemption is submitted to the student's school, and the vaccines that are included in the exemption statement.<sup>3</sup> Use of a health department exemption forms or online vaccine exemption submission pages is NOT required.

### What You Should Know if Using Health Department Exemption Forms

The Colorado health department posts a downloadable personal belief and religious exemption form<sup>4</sup> that is an option for parents to use in lieu of the required personal statement outlined above. This form is not required, but if it is chosen as an option, it should only be submitted directly to the school and not to the health department. It is good practice to read all forms carefully before signing to ensure agreement with the statements.

The health department also has an optional online submission page for personal belief and religious exemptions. Unfortunately some schools try to steer parents into using the online option instead of disclosing that it isn't required. The problem with filling out the online submission page is the student's information goes directly to the health department so it is no longer protected under the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). This allows the health department to use or share a child's exemption information with third parties without parental knowledge or consent. This disclosure could be used to negatively affect a child or for objectionable uses not supportive of families who utilize vaccine exemptions. Use of the online exemption submission page also triggers the submission of a child's exemption information directly into Colorado's vaccine tracking database (Colorado Immunization Information System, CIIS).

Only when a personal statement or a printed form is submitted directly to a school is a child's personal and vaccine exemption information protected under FERPA.

### Disclosure Required

Even though Colorado law (C.R.S. 25-4-903 (4)) requires vaccine exemption rights to be disclosed on all vaccine information distributed to parents, many schools don't do it. Please consider informing a school district of their legal obligation if they are failing and request that vaccine exemption information be included where it is missing.

**Help NVIC protect vaccine exemptions by registering to receive legislative and other updates from the NVIC Advocacy Portal at <http://NVICAdvocacy.org>.**

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/cdphe/schoolrequiredvaccines>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.nvic.org/Vaccine-Laws/state-vaccine-requirements/colorado.aspx>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/cdphe/vaccine-exemptions>

<sup>4</sup> <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B0tmPQ67k3NVY2JzRTVO20Q1eTA/view>