

Recent measles outbreaks have focused increasing attention on vaccination requirements for students. In 2019, three states—Maine, New York, and Washington—removed or limited exemptions to immunization requirements.

Nevada’s immunization laws and related exemptions have been in place since the early 1970s. However, during the 2017 and 2019 Legislative Sessions, advocates on both sides of the issue have appeared more frequently before legislators to make their case for weakening or strengthening the law. As the discussion continues to evolve, policymakers face important decisions about how to move forward.

WHO MUST BE IMMUNIZED?

In Nevada, a child may not be enrolled in a public or private school, including a charter school, unless a parent or guardian submits records showing compliance with the schedule of immunizations established by the State Board of Health. State law sets out the immunization requirements for certain diseases and also allows the State Board of Health and local health boards to determine whether additional vaccines are required.

WHAT LEGAL EXEMPTIONS EXIST?

Nevada law allows parents or guardians to obtain an exemption to this vaccination mandate if a child cannot be immunized due to a medical condition, or if immunization is contrary to the parents’ or guardians’ religious beliefs. Conditional enrollment of students who do not yet have the required immunizations is allowed, under certain circumstances.

HOW CAN EXEMPTIONS BE OBTAINED?

MEDICAL NECESSITY

To obtain an exemption due to medical necessity, parents or guardians must file with the relevant school district, charter school, or private school a written statement documenting the child’s inability to be immunized. The statement must be signed by a licensed physician or advanced practice registered nurse.

* At least one dose of these immunizations is required at ten years of age or older before entering grade 7.

Immunizations required by state law:

- Diphtheria;
- Tetanus;
- Pertussis (whooping cough) if the child is under six years of age;
- Poliomyelitis (polio);
- Rubella; and
- Rubeola (measles).

Immunizations required by the State Board of Health:

- Mumps;
- Hepatitis A;
- Hepatitis B;
- Varicella (chicken pox);
- Bordetella pertussis (whooping cough);* and
- *Neisseria meningitidis* (meningitis).*

Sources: Nevada Revised Statutes (NRS) 392.435;
Nevada Administrative Code (NAC) 392.105

RELIGIOUS BELIEFS

For exemptions relating to religious beliefs, a statement indicating a parent or guardian is claiming an exemption for that purpose must be filed in writing with the appropriate school district, charter school, or private school.

WHEN ARE IMMUNIZATIONS REQUIRED?

Immunizations against the diseases named in statute and by the State Board of Health are required in order to enroll in kindergarten, with the exception of meningitis. The meningitis immunization is not required until grade 7. Also in grade 7, immunization records must be provided showing receipt of an additional tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis (Tdap) immunization, known as a “booster shot.”

WHAT HAPPENS IF THERE IS A DISEASE OUTBREAK AT SCHOOL?

If the State Board of Health or a local health board determines a dangerous contagious disease is present at a school, and at least one child who is exempt from immunization attends that school, the exempt child or children must either be immunized or be excluded from school. If a child is excluded, the school must notify the local health officer. The exclusion period for each disease is established by regulation of the State Board of Health.

HOW MANY CHILDREN ARE VACCINATED WHEN ENTERING SCHOOL?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates 95 percent of kindergarteners who enrolled in Nevada for School Year (SY) 2018–2019 were vaccinated against diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis (DTaP); measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR); polio; and varicella (chicken pox). An estimated 97 percent were vaccinated against hepatitis B. (The CDC does not track administration of the hepatitis A vaccine.)[†]

HOW MANY CHILDREN CLAIM AN EXEMPTION WHEN ENTERING SCHOOL?

The CDC estimates 3.2 percent of Nevada kindergarteners have a religious exemption on file, and 0.2 percent have a medical exemption.[†]

HOW CAN I FIND OUT ABOUT THE VACCINATION RATES AT NEVADA SCHOOLS?

Every school district, charter school, and private school must annually report the number of students who have completed their required immunizations to the Division of Public and Behavioral Health (DPBH) in Nevada’s Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). Data collected from these reports are available and searchable by zip code, city, or school name on the Nevada Vaccines for Children [website](#).

Student immunizations are primarily addressed in:

- [NRS 392.435 through 392.448](#) (Public schools, including charter schools)
- [NRS 394.192 through 394.199](#) (Private schools)
- [NAC 392.105](#) (Public schools, including charter schools)
- [NAC 394.250](#) (Private schools)

Additional information related to infectious diseases can be found in [Chapter 441A of NRS](#) and [Chapter 441A of NAC](#).

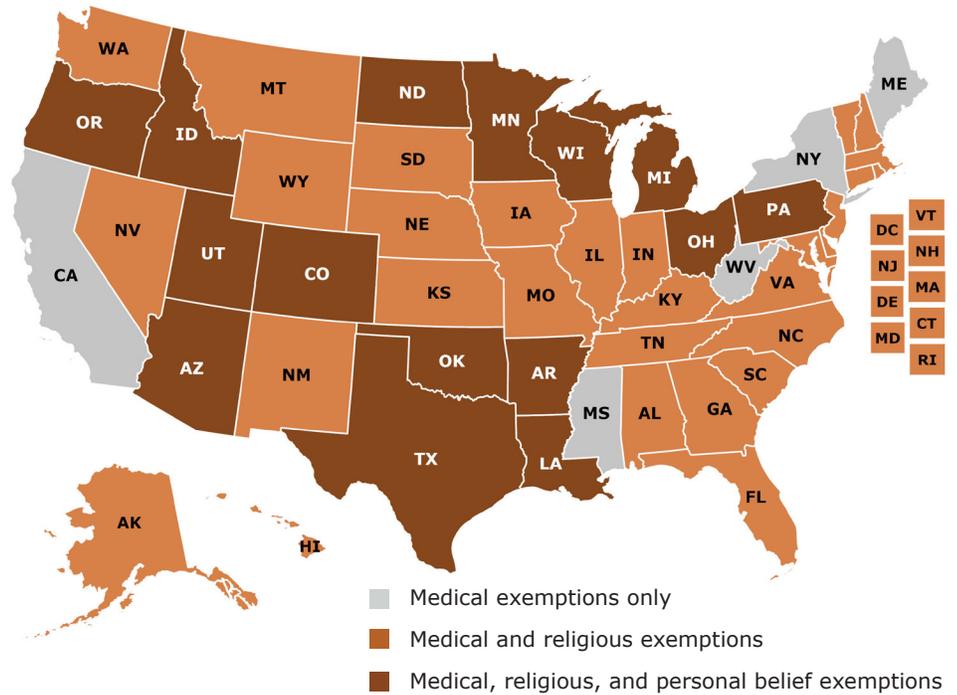
[†] Estimates of vaccination and exemption rates are estimates only and may not add up to 100 percent due to differences in data collection and sampling methods.

HOW DOES NEVADA COMPARE WITH OTHER STATES?

EXEMPTION PROVISIONS

According to the [National Conference of State Legislatures \(NCSL\)](#), Nevada's provisions for immunization exemptions are similar to those of most other states. All 50 states allow exemptions from immunization requirements when medically necessary, and 45 states and the District of Columbia allow exemptions for religious reasons. As of June 2019, only 15 states allow parents or guardians to obtain an exemption on nonreligious philosophical grounds.

STATES THAT ALLOW FOR MEDICAL, RELIGIOUS, AND PHILOSOPHICAL EXEMPTIONS FROM IMMUNIZATIONS, 2019



Source: [NCSL](#)

IMMUNIZATION RATES

According to CDC estimates for SY 2018–2019, Nevada ranks slightly above average in kindergarten vaccination coverage compared to other states.[‡]

KINDERGARTEN VACCINATION COVERAGE, SY 2018–2019[‡]

	MMR (%)	DTP/DTaP/DT (%)	Chicken pox (2 doses) (%)	Hepatitis B (%)	Polio (%)
Nevada	95.1	95.0	94.7	97.4	95.4
U.S. average	94.7	94.9	94.3	95.8	94.7
U.S. median	94.2	94.6	93.8	95.6	94.1

EXEMPTION RATES

Estimates from the CDC suggest the percentage of Nevada kindergartners with religious exemptions from immunization is higher than the national average for non-medical exemptions. Nevada's rate for medical exemptions is slightly lower than the national average.[‡]

KINDERGARTEN VACCINATION EXEMPTION RATES, SY 2018–2019[‡]

	Medical exemption rate (%)	Non-medical exemption rate (%)
Nevada	0.2	3.2
U.S. average	0.3	2.2
U.S. median	0.2	2.5

Sources: "[2018–2019 School Year Vaccination Coverage Report](#)" and "[2018–2019 School Year Vaccination Exemption Report](#)," CDC

[‡] Figures and data are estimates only. See "[SchoolVaxView](#)" on the CDC website for additional information.

WHERE CAN I FIND MORE INFORMATION ABOUT STUDENT IMMUNIZATIONS?

IMMUNIZATIONS FOR CHILDREN

["Vaccines & Immunizations,"](#) CDC

["Immunization Resources,"](#)
DPBH, DHHS

["Vaccines for Children \(VFC\) Program,"](#)
DPBH, DHHS

POLICY AND DATA RESOURCES

["Immunization Policy Issues Overview,"](#) NCSL

["Immunizations,"](#) The Council of State Governments

["SchoolVaxView,"](#) CDC