ARIZONA
DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH SERVICES

Immunization Education Course (IEC) Handbook

Personal Beliefs Exemption Procedures
For all Arizona participating schools, Grades K-12

June 2025

Introduction

Before a child may enter or attend any Arizona school (district and non-district schools), Arizona law requires that an up-to-date immunization record be presented to the school by the parent/guardian. Arizona School Immunization laws allow for the use of exemptions to the state-required immunizations that are a requirement for school attendance. Currently, parents/guardians of children in grades K-12 may exempt their child(ren) from vaccination for personal belief reasons by signing a form provided by the Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS), which states they have received information about immunizations provided by ADHS and understand the benefits of immunization.

The Bureau of Immunization Services strongly recommends strong education for parents and healthcare providers so that parents may make informed decisions regarding immunizations for their children. Additionally, the use of exemptions should only be used for the parents of children who have specific aversions to immunizations, whether it is a medically relevant reason, an inherent personal belief, or religious belief.

This Handbook reviews the school staff responsibilities and procedures when working with parents who wish to request a Personal Beliefs Exemption (PBE) for their child(ren) attending K-12 grades ***in all schools participating in the Immunization Education Course (IEC)***.

Further guidance on all school immunization requirements and procedures can be found in the Arizona Immunization Handbook at the Bureau of Immunization Services Website.

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Commonly Used Definitions

This page gives the definitions of many terms used throughout this handbook. Anytime one of the following terms is used, it is used with the meaning given below. Many of these terms are taken directly from the Arizona statutes and rules governing school immunization requirements.

Administrator
The individual (such as a principal or administrator) or the individual's designee, having general control and supervision of a school or child care facility. This is the person responsible for exclusion and general enforcement of the law and rules.

ASIIS (Arizona State Immunization Information System)
Arizona's life-long immunization registry, a computerized database that collects, stores, analyzes, and reports immunization data. School and child care facilities can sign up for access to look up their students' immunization records.

BIZS
The Bureau of Immunization Services, Arizona Department of Health Services.

Exclude or exclusion
Not allowing a student to attend a school or child care facility based on receipt of an up-to-date immunization record or valid exemption form as per state statute.

Local (County) Health Department
A county health department, board of health, public health officer, public health administrator, or health department having jurisdiction in the area.

Parent
The natural or adoptive mother or father, a legal guardian appointed by a court, or a "custodian" as defined in A.R.S. 8-201. A parent is a person generally recognized as having care and decision-making responsibility for the child.

School
A district school or non-district school education program offering kindergarten through grade 12, or any part thereof.

Online Education Course

Parents/guardians who wish to exempt their child(ren) from school-required immunizations for personal belief reasons must take the ADHS online *Immunization Education Course* in order to obtain information about immunizations, including the risks and benefits of immunizations and the potential risks of non-immunization. The course will then generate a personal beliefs exemption form which indicates that they have viewed the required education, which the parent then signs and provides to the school.

The process does not take away the right of the parent to obtain a personal beliefs exemption form; it changes the process of how the form is obtained. Schools will no longer be responsible for providing or distributing personal beliefs exemption forms. Parents who request an exemption will be directed to the ADHS online *Immunization Education Course,* where they will receive education, then print and sign the online personal beliefs exemption form, and return that form to the school.

This process only applies to the use of Personal Beliefs Exemptions in grades K-12 in participating schools. It does not change the process by which parents request and obtain a Religious Beliefs Exemption for a child(ren) who attends an Arizona child care facility. It also does not affect the ability of a parent to request a medical exemption (temporary or permanent), which must be signed by a healthcare provider (physician or nurse practitioner).

The course is available for anyone to view. If this is for information and education only, then the exemption form does not need to be printed. The individual can review the course for the educational content and exit when they are done.

In order to respect the privacy of those taking the course, the online *Immunization Education Course* **does not collect or store any personal information**. The school retains the completed personal beliefs exemption form in the student health file, and information regarding individual student information is not shared.

1. Purpose

The purpose of the *Immunization Education Course* is to provide information so that parents and guardians can make an informed decision about vaccinating their children. The course will provide parents and guardians with information about school immunization requirements, vaccine-preventable diseases, available vaccines, potential adverse outcomes from the diseases, and the risks unvaccinated children pose to other children who cannot be vaccinated for medical reasons.

2. Participation in the IEC

School Districts and schools have the option to participate in the *Immunization Education Course,* which directs all parents who request an exemption to complete the modules on vaccines and vaccine-preventable diseases. Non-participating schools allow parents to access the personal belief exemption form without first completing the educational course.

3. Referring Parents to the Course

If a parent/guardian is enrolling or registering their child(ren) for school and requests a Personal Beliefs Exemption, direct them to view and complete the Arizona Department of Health Services online *Immunization Education Course*. Information forms containing the web link will be provided to schools to give to parents. Parents/guardians can access the course on a personal computer, a mobile phone or other mobile device, or a computer at a local library.

Parents/guardians may also check with their school, as they may have a computer and/or printer available for use; this will be an independent choice of the school and may not be available.

4. Completion of the Course

When the online *Immunization Education Course* has been completed, the parent will be directed to print out a Personal Beliefs Exemption form, which they are to sign and return to the school.

- ✔ The course is designed so that the parent need only go through the education course once even if they have multiple children.
- ✔ The parent will select and review all the vaccines that apply to their child(ren) and print one exemption form, which contains the parent's name, generated by the course. The parent can print multiple copies of the form from the course or print one and make their own copies for each child for whom they wish to obtain an exemption.
- ✔ There is a space on the exemption form where the parent will write in the name of their child and his/her birthdate.
- ✔ A parent signature and date is required to authenticate the form.
- ✔ Submit the form(s) to the child's school.

The course is not designed for a group of parents to watch together, as each individual parent must print out an exemption form with their own name on it. If parents wish to watch together for general education and do not intend to print an exemption form, then the course may be watched as a group.

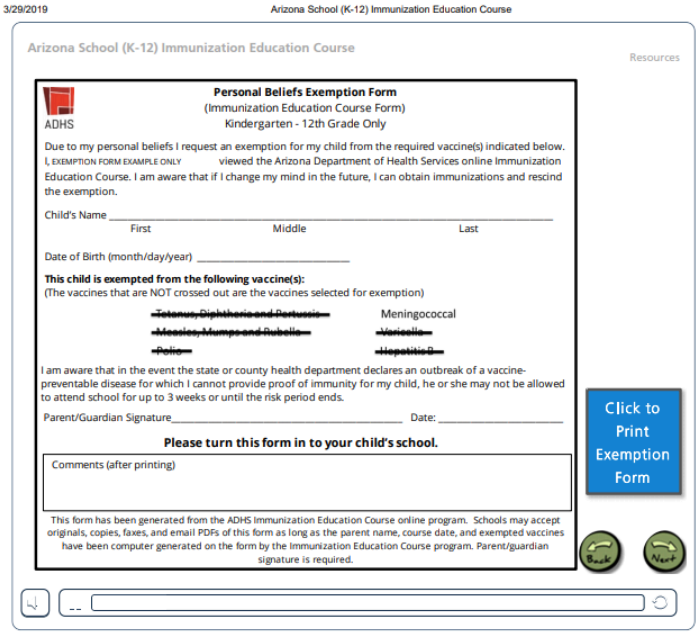
5. Form Appearance and Validity

Upon completion, the online *Immunization Education Course* will produce a Personal Beliefs Exemption form. If a parent submits a Personal Beliefs Exemption form **that appears to be altered in any way (such as adding information or crossing out information by hand), it cannot be accepted by schools.** The form will contain the following information:

- ✔ ADHS logo (upper left-hand corner).
- ✔ Statement that it is from the *Immunization Education Course.*
- ✔ ADHS language will be contained on the Personal Beliefs Exemption form.
- ✔ All required vaccines will be computer-generated on the form. Vaccine(s) not selected for exemption will have a bold black computer-generated line through them. **The vaccine(s) selected for exemption will NOT have a bold line through it.** *See example below.
- ✔ The parent or guardian's name will be computer-generated/printed on the form by the course.
- ✔ A line will be available for the parent to write in the name and birthdate of the child who is receiving the exemption.

- ✔ A line will be available for parent signature and date. This is required for the form to be valid.
- ✔ Additional language regarding exclusion from school in the case of a state or county-declared disease outbreak.
- ✔ A comment box at the bottom of the form. Parents may add their handwritten comments after printing the form from the course.

The printed exemption form will appear as below:



6. Allowable Formats

Since the course can be completed either at a computer or on a mobile device, the following formats can be accepted by the schools as a valid exemption form:

- ✔ The ADHS Form printed directly from a computer/printer – the form will print out the parent's name. Parent will then write in the child's name and birthdate.
- ✔ Copies of the printed ADHS form – must have the parent's name printed on it from the computer course. Parents can then write in the child's name and birthdate – usually used if parent has multiple children.
- ✔ Printed ADHS form can be faxed to the school, but must contain all information, including parent signature/date.
- ✔ If using a mobile device, a screenshot or photo of the completed form is acceptable, which can then be printed at another location that has a printer. If sent to the school, the parent will still need to come and sign the form in order for it to be valid.
- ✔ Parents may also scan and email the completed and signed forms to the school.

7. Indicators for Immunization Education Course Completion

Examples of when the *Immunization Education Course* will need to be completed and a personal beliefs exemption form submitted to the school include:

- ✔ Children initially enrolling in/attending a school at any entry level (K-12).
- ✔ Children initially enrolling in/attending a school as new to an Arizona school coming from a different state or country at any grade level (K-12).
- ✔ When the student changes/transfers schools and/or districts within Arizona at any grade level (K-12), for example:
    - o entry into kindergarten after attending a preschool
    - o transferring to a stand-alone middle school
    - o transferring to a high school
    - o transferring schools at any grade level
- ✔ When the vaccine requirements change for the student's age or grade, for example:
    - o entry into kindergarten after attending a preschool
    - o when they turn 11 years of age
    - o when a new state immunization requirement is added or changes

Personal Beliefs (or Philosophical Beliefs) Exemption forms from other states or countries are not permitted. Exemption forms are not required to be completed each year, unless the student meets one of the criteria listed above. Schools/districts may choose to have a more stringent policy than the state.

8. Existing Personal Beliefs Exemption Form on File

If a student is remaining in the same school and has an existing ADHS personal beliefs exemption, then that form is considered valid and can be accepted/retained, unless the student now meets one of the criteria in section 7.

If a student is enrolled for the current school year and previously completed a Personal Beliefs Exemption form, and then that school elects to participate in the *Immunization Education Course,* the current forms on file may be accepted as valid, and the parent does not need to complete the online course.

9. Record-keeping

The school should keep only the most current and applicable exemption form in the student's school health file. In the event that a new exemption form is signed, then the older exemption form can be destroyed. There is no reason to continue to keep old exemption forms in the health file if a more current form is provided.

The school should make/keep a copy of any and all immunization records and current exemption forms, and keep them in the child's school health record. If information is entered into a school immunization software program (such as CHIP, Synergy, Power School, etc.), the most current copies of immunization records should still be kept on file. Parents should be encouraged to keep a copy of all information for their personal files.

A student's immunization records, including exemption forms, are considered to be historical and part of the Permanent Student Record, which is to be archived and kept in perpetuity after the student graduates or terminates schooling earlier. Please check your school or district policy on records retention and procedures. The Arizona State Library, Archives and Public Records (L.A.P.R.) provides guidance and FAQs for School Districts and Charter Schools, which can be found here.

10. Special Admission Scenarios

Foster Care Students

The Arizona Department of Child Safety (DCS) states that licensed foster parents cannot impose their vaccine hesitancy beliefs on foster children and are not authorized to request a school or child care vaccine exemption for a foster child. DCS policy is that foster children must be fully immunized unless there is a medical contraindication, which would then require an ADHS Medical Exemption Form to be completed. If there is a foster child whose parental rights have not yet been terminated and foster parents are asking a school or child care for a vaccine exemption because the actual parents do not want the child immunized, then DCS will go to court to get the authority to have the foster children properly immunized.

Contact information for the State Foster Care Education Coordinator:

Joey Taylor
Phone: (602) 542-3569
Emails: Joey.Taylor@azed.gov or FosterCare@azed.gov

Homeless Students

Homeless students are protected by the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. Families and homeless students are often not able to get and keep copies of immunization records. According to the McKinney-Vento Act, schools must allow homeless students to enroll, attend classes, and participate fully in school activities, even if their immunization and other school records are missing or unavailable at the time of enrollment. Once a homeless student is enrolled, school staff should work with the student's former school to obtain the student's immunization records quickly.

ARS 15-872 states that while the school is still required to obtain a student's immunization record and ensure that the student has met all immunization requirements, it also says that students in a homeless situation are not required to provide documentary proof of immunization until the fifth calendar day after enrollment in school. The Arizona Department of Education (ADE) has interpreted the McKinney-Vento Act to supersede regulations established by individual states.

If the parent of a homeless student requests a Personal Beliefs Exemption form, they must take the ADHS online *Immunization Education Course* and provide a signed exemption form to the school.

Because the ADE is the primary state agency that regulates schools, and they have a great deal of knowledge and expertise in matters concerning McKinney-Vento, ADHS defers to them concerning the continued attendance of homeless students without proof of immunizations. Further information can be found in the ADE Guidance for Immunizations for Homeless Students.

If a child or youth experiencing homelessness needs to obtain immunization or other required health records, the enrolling school will immediately refer the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth to the local liaison, who will assist in obtaining necessary immunizations or screenings, or immunization or other required health records [42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(3)(C)(iii)]. Homeless students should not be excluded from school for being out of compliance with school immunization requirements. Please refer to the ADE Office of Homeless Education for additional information.

Contact information for the State Homeless Coordinator:

Rita Rodriguez

Phone: (602) 542-4963
Email: homeless@azed.gov

Homeschooled Students

Arizona Revised Statute 15-802.01 allows homeschooled students to participate in public school interscholastic activities (such as sports, band, and music) "in the same manner" as pupils who are enrolled in public schools. Enrollment, policies, and requirements for homeschooled students are to be consistent with those policies established for students enrolled at that public school.

Homeschooled children currently enrolled and attending classes at a school with a valid ADHS exemption form in place do not need to take the online *Immunization Education Course*, unless they meet any of the criteria in section 7.

Parents of newly enrolling homeschooled children who request an exemption must complete the ADHS online *Immunization Education Course* and submit a completed and signed ADHS Personal Beliefs Exemption form to the school.

Non-registered "special course" Students

Children in preschool or child care who attend a district school for any type of class, such as speech, are to present an immunization record and/or exemption form to be in compliance with Arizona school immunization requirements. Since children in childcare can only use the Religious Beliefs Exemption form, they will not be required to take the online *Immunization Education Course,* but should complete a valid ADHS Religious Beliefs Exemption Form.

FAQs

What if a parent wants a personal beliefs exemption form but does not want to complete the course?

- By state law (A.R.S. §15-873), a child will not be allowed to attend school until either proof of immunization or a completed and valid exemption form is submitted to the school. Refer parent to school Administration.

We allowed the child to come to school not knowing they did not have all their necessary school-required vaccinations. When we discovered the oversight, we sent an immunization referral form with a due date to the parent, but we still have not heard from them. What do we do?

- Refer the parent to school administration for consideration of exclusion from school.

The parent viewed the course, printed out an exemption form, and then found out they missed or forgot to take one of their selected vaccine modules. They then reviewed the missing module and printed out a second exemption form. We now have 2 exemption forms for the same student. What do we do?

- If two forms are presented, treat them like one exemption form for the student. Make sure that together, the forms indicate all the vaccines the parents have identified for their child to be exempted from, staple the forms together, and count as one exemption form for the student.

The child has a personal beliefs exemption form on file, but now the parent has taken the child to get all their vaccinations. What do we do?

- If the parent has provided the school with a current, up-to-date immunization record that meets the Arizona School Requirements, then the exemption form may be withdrawn as it is no longer applicable.

A student has now received one (or more) of the immunizations they were previously exempted from. What do we do?

- The school health office personnel or office administrative personnel must review the submitted immunization document. Once it is verified that the immunization has been obtained, the school may cross out the name of the vaccine which is listed on the Personal Beliefs Exemption form, initial and date, and write in the date of the vaccination on the exemption form. The vaccination record should be kept with the health files. School personnel should also update any other records accordingly (i.e., school software program or the Arizona School Immunization Record (ASIR).

What if a child gets a vaccination for a previously exempted requirement, but still doesn't meet the school requirements (for example, they received 1 MMR, but need 2)?

- Parents are to submit the current, most up-to-date vaccination record to the school. A child may continue to attend school while they are in the "minimal interval" or "dose waiting" period. ADHS refers to this as conditional admission. It will be the responsibility of the school to remind the parent when the next dose is due. If the child does not receive the required dose at the appropriate time, then the child is to be excluded from school.

Are copies, emails, or faxes of the ADHS form acceptable?

- Yes. Copies, faxes, and emails of the completed ADHS Immunization Education Course form are acceptable, provided the parent signs and dates the form.
- If the parent chooses to send a PDF file to the school to print out, the parent will then need to come to the school to sign and date the form. The form is not valid without a parent signature.

Does a parent always have to sign the exemption form?

- Yes. It is required that parents authenticate the form by signature and date.

When would a parent need to submit a personal beliefs exemption form to the school?

- Examples of when the Immunization Education Course will need to be completed and a personal beliefs exemption form submitted to the school include:
    - When a student first registers or enrolls for school at kindergarten.
    - When the student registers or enrolls as new to an Arizona school (coming from a different state).
    - When the student changes/transfers schools within Arizona.
    - When the vaccine requirements change for the student's age or grade (for example, when they turn 11 years of age).
    - When they enter/transfer into middle school or high school.

Are exemption forms required to be completed each year?

- No. Exemption forms do not need to be completed every year, unless the student meets one of the criteria listed above.

We sometimes get homeschooled children registered to attend a class or two on campus, such as band or Physical Education (PE). What is required of the parent?

- Homeschoolers who attend any classes on a school campus are usually required to register at that school and, therefore, are required to adhere to the Arizona school immunization requirements. The parent will need to turn in a complete, up-to-date immunization record or take the ADHS Immunization Education Course to obtain a personal beliefs exemption form for the student.

What if a parent wants a personal beliefs exemption form from a participating school but does not want to complete the course at all?

- By state law (A.R.S. §15-873), a child will not be allowed to attend school until either proof of immunization or a completed and valid exemption form is submitted to the school. Refer the parent to school administration for consideration of exclusion from school.

Can any parent or anyone in general view the ADHS Immunization Education Course?

- Yes, the link to the Immunization Education Course is public-facing.

Resources

Arizona Revised Statutes 15-871 through 15-874	Arizona Revised Statutes
Arizona Administrative Code, Title 9, Chapter 6, Article 7	AZ Administrative Code, Title 9
State Offices	
Bureau of Immunization Services (BIZS)	(602) 364-3630
AZ State Immunization Information System (ASIIS)	(602) 364-3899 *toll free* (877) 491-5741
Arizona Department of Education - School Safety & Social Wellness	(602) 542-8700
Helpline for Schools/ Child Care	*toll free* (866) 222-2329
ADHS/BIZS School Forms and Guidance	http://azdhs.gov/phs/immunization/school-childcare/requirements.htm
Arizona Department of Education	http://www.azed.gov
County Offices	
Apache County Public Health Services District	(928) 333-2415
Cochise Health and Social Services	(520) 432-9400
Coconino County Public Health Services District	(928) 679-7272
Gila County Division of Health & Emergency Services	(928) 425-3189
Graham County Health Department	(928) 428-0110
Greenlee County Health Department	(928) 865-2601
La Paz County Health Department	(928) 669-1100
Maricopa County Department of Public Health • Immunization Program & Communicable Disease Reporting	(602) 506-6900 (602) 506-6767
Mohave County Department of Public Health	(928) 753-0714

Navajo County Public Health Services District	(928) 532-6050
Pima County Health Department • Immunization Program	(520) 724-7988 (520) 724-7763
Pinal County Public Health Services District	(520) 866-7358
Santa Cruz County Health Department	(520) 375-7900
Yavapai County Community Health Services	(928) 583-1000
Yuma County Public Health Services District	(928) 317-4559

Vaccine Resources	
The Arizona Partnership for Immunization (TAPI)	http://www.whyimmunize.org
Centers for Disease Control (CDC) & Prevention, Vaccines	http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines
American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)	http://www.aap.org
Immunization Action Coalition (IAC)	http://www.immunize.org