



IMMUNIZATION POLICY RATIONALE

SECRETARIAT FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION (2013)

The policy of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia with respect to vaccinations, requires all children to be vaccinated against a wide variety of diseases. Exceptions are not granted, except for medical reasons. Rationale for this policy follows.

Opposition to vaccines arises from two prominent concerns. First, some oppose vaccines due to the manner in which the vaccine is developed. These people object to the fact that some vaccines are produced from cells derived from aborted human fetuses. The second major objection is that vaccines are harmful to the health of the child.

Objection: Vaccines Produced from Cells Derived from Aborted Human Fetuses

Some object on the level of conscience because the vaccines come from aborted fetal cell lines, and to receive them would be cooperating with evil. The moral argument in favor of using vaccines made from aborted fetal cell lines is based on the notion of the Catholic principle of cooperation with evil.

The use of the vaccines in question would not constitute a formal (i.e., on the level of intention) cooperation with the act of abortion. There is no formal cooperation (either explicit or implicit) in such an action, because the user's intention is not to procure an abortion, but to benefit from something derived from the aborted fetuses. Their use would be morally permissible on a provisional basis. At the same time, Catholics would have a responsibility to press for the creation of more morally acceptable alternatives.

The Vatican Pontifical Academy for Life's *Moral Reflection on Vaccines Produced from Cells Derived from Aborted Human Foetuses* permits such vaccines "on a temporary basis" while recognizing the duty Catholics have to work for a better solution.

It is clear that parents have no obligation to refuse immunizations derived from cultures taken from aborted fetal cell lines when no suitable substitute immunizations are available. Their cooperation with evil is clearly "remote material cooperation" and therefore morally permissible. Enforcing the current policy of the Archdiocese involves no formal or "immediate material" cooperation in evil, but only remote cooperation.

Objection: Vaccines may prove harmful to the health of the child.

To date, there has been no authoritative study that conclusively links vaccines with harmful side effects.

The Church respects the rights of conscience and encourages the faithful to follow their rightly formed consciences. To do so, it is important for parents to examine magisterial teaching themselves and weigh the opinions of experts in such a matter. The document produced by the Vatican Pontifical Academy for Life (mentioned above) is one such opinion. The memorandum from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Committee on Doctrine, which disallows conscientious objection to the use of the rubella vaccine, is another.

In the matter at hand, the Church is not trying to force parents to change their well-formed consciences on vaccinations (even if they are against the conclusion of the above-mentioned document). However, they must accept the consequences. One such consequence is that their child cannot be enrolled in a Catholic school.

Parental right to object to these vaccines can come in conflict with the rights of others to preserve their health and be educated in a safe, disease-free environment. Not vaccinating a child for school may jeopardize the health of the entire student body and affect the larger population. When such conflicts arise between individual rights and the rights of the community, the decision should be taken in favor of the common good. This is the best way to serve the needs of human persons, the needs of justice, the needs of society, and the needs of public authority. This judgment is especially important when it comes to issues of public health.

It is uncertain as to what degree abstaining from vaccinations can be done without causing significant risk to children and the population as a whole. Without a clear determination from the scientific community of the safety of granting exemptions from vaccinations, prudence counsels to err on the side of the common good. We have a moral obligation to ensure the safety of the common good.

Consciences of those who object to immunizations for moral reasons should be respected. They have the right to follow their conscience on the matter and choose not to immunize their child. A Catholic school has the obligation to make a moral choice about what is most prudent and just for its populace and has the right to implement it. Should the determination be made that the common good and justice are best served by making immunizations compulsory in order to enroll children, then the right to do so exists. In such a conflict, it is best to err in favor of the common good. In other words, concern for the common good legitimately can override parental calls for a Catholic religious or moral exemption from these vaccinations.

Students who attend Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia are required to receive all vaccines that are identified in the immunization policy (#S 305).

SCHOOL VACCINATION REQUIREMENTS FOR ATTENDANCE IN PENNSYLVANIA SCHOOLS

FOR ATTENDANCE IN ALL GRADES CHILDREN NEED THE FOLLOWING:



- 4 doses of tetanus, diphtheria, and acellular pertussis* (1 dose on or after the 4th birthday)
- 4 doses of polio (4th dose on or after 4th birthday and at least 6 months after previous dose given)**
- 2 doses of measles, mumps, rubella***
- 3 doses of hepatitis B
- 2 doses of varicella (chickenpox) or evidence of immunity

*Usually given as DTP or DTaP or if medically advisable, DT or Td

** A fourth dose is not necessary if the third dose was administered at age 4 years or older and at least 6 months after the previous dose

***Usually given as MMR



ON THE FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL, unless the child has a medical or religious/philosophical exemption, a child must have had at least one dose of the above vaccinations or risk exclusion.

- If a child does not have all the doses listed above, needs additional doses, and the next dose is medically appropriate, the child must receive that dose within the first five days of school or risk exclusion. If the next dose is not the final dose of the series, the child must also provide a medical plan (red and white card) within the first five days of school for obtaining the required immunizations or risk exclusion.

- If a child does not have all the doses listed above, needs additional doses, and the next dose is not medically appropriate, the child must provide a medical plan (red and white card) within the first five days of school for obtaining the required immunizations or risk exclusion.

- The medical plan must be followed or risk exclusion.

FOR ATTENDANCE IN 7TH GRADE:

- 1 dose of tetanus, diphtheria, acellular pertussis (Tdap) on the first day of 7th grade.
- 1 dose of meningococcal conjugate vaccine (MCV) on the first day of 7th grade.

ON THE FIRST DAY OF 7TH GRADE, unless the child has a medical or religious/philosophical exemption, a child must have had the above vaccines or risk exclusion.

FOR ATTENDANCE IN 12TH GRADE:

- 1 dose of MCV on the first day of 12th grade. If one dose was given at 16 years of age or older, that shall count as the twelfth grade dose.

ON THE FIRST DAY OF 12TH GRADE, unless the child has a medical or religious/philosophical exemption, a child must have had the above vaccines or risk exclusion.

The vaccines required for entrance, 7th grade and 12th grade continue to be required in each succeeding school year.

These requirements allow for the following exemptions: medical reason, religious belief, or philosophical/strong moral or ethical conviction. Even if your child is exempt from immunizations, he or she may be excluded from school during an outbreak of vaccine preventable disease.

Pennsylvania's school immunization requirements can be found in 28 Pa.CODE CH.23 (School Immunization). Contact your healthcare provider or call 1-877-PA-HEALTH for more information.



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