



Support legislation to increase immunization coverage for children.

Immunization is one of the most cost-effective and successful public health interventions. Vaccine exemptions are threatening this progress.

Importance of Vaccines

Vaccines are among the most effective means of preventing infectious diseases. Federal and professional guidelines recommend childhood and adolescent immunizations to protect against a wide range of viral and bacterial infections whose consequences can include disease, permanent disabilities and death.

Public participation in immunization programs is critical to their effectiveness. Protection is greatly affected by rates of immunization: the more people immunized, the less the risk of exposure of everyone to, and illness from, vaccine-preventable infections.

Exemptions Put Children At-Risk from Preventable Disease

Immunization levels have dropped in various populations in recent decades, and otherwise preventable infectious diseases have made dramatic comebacks. Some of this can be traced back to vaccine exemptions. A family refusing to vaccinate an individual child places that child at risk and increases the risk of infection for others in the community.

Recent data from the Centers for Disease Control indicates an increase in nonmedical exemptions across the United States. Currently, only two states do not allow exemptions for religious or philosophical reasons. Without proper vaccine coverage, unvaccinated populations are at risk.

As outbreaks of measles and pertussis (whooping cough) are the rise, states policymakers are taking action to address it.

Policy regarding exemption

The March of Dimes supports ongoing efforts to increase immunization coverage and address exemptions so that children are protected from vaccine-preventable diseases to assure that diseases of the past do not return.

Key Points

Vaccines are one of the best ways to prevent infectious disease. However, their effectiveness relies on public participation.

- The immunity of a population relies on the public following vaccination guidelines
- One child who is not vaccinated can place not only themselves, but a whole community at risk.
- According to the CDC, nonmedical exemptions are on the rise.
- Vaccine exemptions are putting the public at risk and threaten to erase years of progress
- Measles has re-emerged in the United States causing hundreds of cases a year. These outbreaks are often found in pockets of unvaccinated populations.

Contact information:

Melanie Lockhart
 Director, State Affairs
mlockhart@marchofdimes.org