

Centers for Disease Control
and Prevention (CDC)
Atlanta GA 30333

November 17, 2015

Edwina Rogers
Secular Policy Institute
401 Ninth St., NW, Suite 640
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Ms. Rogers;

Thank you for your letter expressing the need for a nationally mandated vaccine policy. As the U.S. leading public health agency, Secretary Burwell asked that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) respond on her behalf. CDC takes its responsibility for protecting the health and safety of all Americans very seriously. Vaccines are one of our greatest public health achievements, reducing tremendous suffering and saving millions of lives by eliminating or reducing disease.

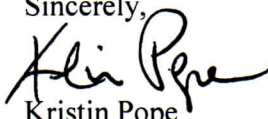
The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) is a federal advisory committee that provides technical advice and guidance to the Director of CDC on control of vaccine-preventable diseases. The ACIP is the only advisory committee serving the federal government that makes such recommendations. Recommendations made by the ACIP are reviewed by the CDC Director, and if adopted, published as official CDC recommendations in the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR). The ACIP reviews many factors when considering potential vaccine recommendations. These factors include: disease burden in the general U.S. population and in specific risk groups; available scientific information on the safety, immunologic response, efficacy, effectiveness, and acceptability of the immunizing agent; economic data; clinical trial results and use information provided in the manufacturer's labeling or package insert; recommendations of other professional liaison organizations; and the feasibility of incorporating the vaccine into existing domestic immunization programs. These are recommendations, not mandates. The ACIP recommendations are often considered by the states as they determine which vaccinations to mandate.

As such, the CDC does not set immunization requirements. Instead, each state decides which immunizations are required in addition to allowable exemptions. The requirements for immunization for attendance at school, day care, or college may be enacted by individual institutions or are based on state laws or regulations. All states allow medical exemptions, most allow religious exemptions, and many allow personal belief exemptions. There is substantial variation among states in what is required to obtain a personal belief exemption. Some states require the completion of online training on benefits and risks of vaccinating and not vaccinating, or counseling by a health care provider. These new educational requirements provide an opportunity to evaluate the effectiveness of this approach.

Given that these policy matters are addressed primarily at the state level, I encourage you to get involved with immunization policy at the state level. To learn more about a state's immunization requirements, CDC encourages you to contact the State Immunization Program (<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/imz-managers/awardee-imz-websites.html>) or Department of Health (<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/international/relres.html>).

Thank you for continued attention to vital public health issues.

Sincerely,



Kristin Pope

Associate Director for Policy

National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention