

IMMUNIZATION POLICIES:

1. Vaccines currently recommended for routine child immunization in the USA by the federally chartered Advisory Committee on Immunization Practice (ACIP) and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) reduce the risk of disease transmission within the community, prevent serious illness, permanent disability, premature death and reduce selected healthcare expenditures. Most currently available vaccines are cost-effective and cost-beneficial. Thus, currently recommended immunization schedules provide individual and community protection and cost savings..

2. Individuals (or parents or guardians in the case of children) decide to receive immunizations, usually based upon the advice of medical practitioners. Physicians are the most trusted source of vaccine-related advice. Physicians providing such advice, both publicly and within the physician-patient relationship, should base their advice on current scientific knowledge and on the recommendations of recognized medical authorities and organizations, most prominently, ACIP and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP). Physicians should be held accountable for the consequences of their vaccine-related advice, by the same mechanisms and institutions that hold physicians accountable for all other professional communications.

3. At the local level, AAPHP recommends that all localities and school districts use the expertise of qualified public health physicians to: (a) educate everyone about the dangers of vaccine-preventable disease and the importance of vaccination; (b) review local vaccine-preventable disease policies for conformance with State law and with recognized professional practice; (c) oversee systems of review for medical contraindications to vaccination; (d) oversee systems that monitor the level of vaccine protection in schools and in the community; and (e) monitor current local, regional, and national disease-surveillance data in order to adjust community protection strategies as needed.

4. At the state level, AAPHP recommends that State executive and legislative authorities: (a) adequately support the local activities outlined above; (b) have in place an established decision mechanism that involves qualified public health physicians that determines which vaccines will be mandatory for admission to school and other identified public venues and which should be based upon the recommendations of ACIP and AAP; (c) have in place a procedure whereby an individual, through a licensed physician, may request a medical exemption and whereby such requests will receive consistent and timely review by a public health physician; (d) not allow exemptions for philosophical, religious or other non-medical reasons, because disease exposures, importations, infections and outbreaks may occur without warning in any community.

5. At the national level, AAPHP recommends that federal agencies and Congress: (a) adequately support the local and state activities outlined above; (b) continue to inform health institutions, practitioners and the public regarding recommended immunizations and recommend policies and procedures to govern immunization-related exclusions. Where appropriate, federal funding could be used to incentivize a high levels of community protection against vaccine-preventable diseases.