

History of Connecticut School Immunization Requirements

By: Nicole Dube, Principal Analyst
August 3, 2021 | 2021-R-0132

Issue

Provide a history of legislative and regulatory changes made to Connecticut's school immunization schedule.

Summary

Connecticut's school immunization schedule began in earnest in 1959, when the legislature enacted a law authorizing local school boards to require polio vaccination for public school students and established both a medical and religious exemption from the immunization requirement (PA 59-588). (A 1923 law allowed school boards to require unspecified immunizations and provided for medical, but not religious, exemptions.)

In 1969, the legislature added measles to the list of immunizations local school boards could require for public school students and subsequently made both measles and polio vaccinations mandatory in 1973 and 1978, respectively.

Up until 1993, changes to the required school immunization schedule were made legislatively. The schedule was extended to both public and private school students and included immunizations against measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR); polio; diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis (DTAP); and for children under age 5, Hemophilus influenza B (Hib).

Legislation enacted in 1991 required DPH to set the school immunization schedule and to do so based on the recommended schedules of the federal Center for Disease Control's (CDC) Advisory

Council on Immunization (ACIP) or the American Academy of Pediatrics. DPH subsequently adopted regulations adding immunizations to the schedule based on ACIP recommendations, including (1) Hepatitis B (1996), (2) varicella (2000), and (3) for preschool and kindergarten students, Hepatitis A, pneumococcus, and influenza (2011).

The table below lists legislative and regulatory changes made the school immunization schedule from 1923 to the present.

Table 1: Regulatory and Legislative Changes to Connecticut’s School Immunization Schedule

Year	Citation	Description
1923	PA 23-271	Authorized boards of education to require students to be immunized prior to attending public school (did not specify which immunizations); provided an exemption for students with a medical certificate from a physician indicating immunization was contraindicated
1959	PA 59-588	Authorized boards of education to require polio vaccination for public school students; established medical and religious exemptions for the vaccination
1969	PA 69-42	Authorized boards of education to require measles vaccination for public school students; provides medical and religious exemptions
1973	PA 73-510	Required, rather than allowed, school boards to require measles vaccination for public school students; provided a 30-day grace period for students to comply with the requirement
1977	PA 77-52	Added rubella, in addition to measles, to the required school immunizations for public school students; provided medical and religious exemptions
1978	PA 78-165	Made polio vaccination mandatory; added diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis (DTAP) to the required vaccine schedule; extended the requirements to private school students in addition to public school students; required DPH to (1) establish school immunization data collection procedures and (2) adopt regulations to define “adequate immunization” against these conditions (DPH adopted associated regulations in 1978)
1981	PA 81-139	Added mumps to the required school immunization schedule (DPH adopted regulations defining “adequate immunization” against mumps in 1981)
1991	PA 91-327	Required DPH to set the school immunization schedule based on the recommended schedules of ACIP or the American Academy of Pediatrics; added to the required school immunization schedule Hemophilus Influenza B (HiB) (for children under age 5) and any other vaccine DPH adds to the schedule; requires second measles immunization for students before entering 7th grade
1993	Conn. Agencies Regs., § 10-204a-1 et seq.	In accordance with PA 91-327, DPH adopted regulations mandating school immunizations based on the ACIP recommended immunization schedule

Table 1 (continued)

Year	Citation	Description
1996	Conn. Agencies Regs., § 10-204a-1 et seq.	DPH adopted regulations adding Hepatitis B to the school immunization schedule
2000	Conn. Agencies Regs., § 10-204a-1 et seq.	DPH adopted regulations requiring varicella (chicken pox) immunizations for students prior to initial enrollment and enrolling in 7th grade; added a second measles immunization prior to initial enrollment; modified recommendations for timing of administering polio, DTAP, and HiB immunizations; revised the schedule for catch-up immunizations
2005	Conn. Agencies Regs., § 10-204a-1 et seq.	DPH adopted regulations modifying the timing of administering Hepatitis B immunizations based on ACIP recommendations
2011	Conn. Agencies Regs., § 10-204a-1 et seq.	DPH adopted regulations requiring meningococcus (meningitis) immunization for students entering 7th grade; added Hepatitis A, influenza, and pneumococcus (pneumonia) immunization for students enrolling in preschool or kindergarten; modified recommendations for timing of administration of other school immunizations based on ACIP recommended schedule
2015	PA 15-174	Extended the religious exemption to children who present a statement from their parent or guardian that an immunization would be contrary to the parents' or guardians' religious beliefs, instead of only the children's religious beliefs; required the statement to be officially acknowledged by specified officials (e.g., notary public or town clerk); required religious exemption statement to be submitted annually
2015	PA 15-242	Eliminated the annual submission requirement for religious exemption statements and instead requires submission prior to initial enrollment in public or private school and before enrolling in 7th grade; added school nurses to the list of officials who can acknowledge a religious exemption statement
2021	PA 21-6	Eliminated the religious exemption and grandfathered in students enrolled in grades kindergarten or higher who submitted a religious exemption prior to April 28, 2021. Generally, requires children with prior religious exemptions enrolled in pre-kindergarten or below to comply with immunization requirements by September 1, 2022, or within 14 days after transferring to a different school, unless they present a written declaration from their medical provider that an alternative immunization schedule is recommended

ND:kl