

Overview of New Immunization Policy

Here is a summary of the new Immunization Policy to help you clarify any concerns from parents or community members.

It is important that everyone understands that the Catholic Church is not opposed to immunizations. In fact, the Catholic Church has an obligation to protect and promote the welfare of all children and the common good against this serious health threat. Based on this teaching, the Archdiocese of Seattle updated its policies.

The 2017 Statement from the *Pontifical Academy of Life*, states there is

“a moral obligation to guarantee the vaccination coverage necessary for the safety of others... we believe that all clinically recommended vaccines can be used with a clear conscience and that the use of such vaccines does not signify some sort of cooperation with voluntary abortion.”

While Washington State allows religious and medical exemptions for MMR vaccination, the Archdiocese, following the Catholic Church’s support of immunization for the good of all, will no longer accept religious exemptions in our Catholic schools.

Upon further research and understanding of the Church’s position, the Archdiocese developed a policy to support the vaccinations required by the State of Washington for school attendance. Again, consistent with the teachings of the Church no exemptions except for medical exemptions will be allowed. The Archdiocese honors all health care providers as identified on the Medical Exemption form of the State.

While the new policy goes into effect January 1, 2020, students may remain in school for the academic year so families have time to make a decision that was best for them.

The Catholic Church is following its responsibility to provide for the common good of all with accurate information about the science of immunizations, our faith, beliefs and actions. The religious support of the Church are expressed in the new Immunization Policy, which we will communicate in Family Handbooks, Employee Manuals and Health Care documents.

To summarize, here are the key points:

- **The policy is aligned with the teachings of the Catholic Church**
- **The policy will go into effect on January 2020**
- **Students may remain in school until the end of the academic year**
- **Students at all Level 1 Catholic School in the Archdiocese of Seattle must show evidence of vaccination by September 2020**
- **Medical exemptions are still allowed with a State form on file**

IMMUNIZATION POLICY for CATHOLIC SCHOOLS in the SEATTLE ARCHDIOCESE

Prior to entry, attendance or transfer to Level 1 pre-school through high school in the Archdiocese of Seattle, students must present proof of having had the immunizations as required by Washington State law.

Every student enrolled in a Level 1 Catholic School in the Archdiocese of Seattle shall be immunized against vaccine preventable diseases caused by infectious agents in accordance with the immunization schedule adopted by the Washington State Department of Health Services. The only exception to the foregoing requirements for students in our Catholic schools is a medical exemption signed by a licensed physician (M.D., N.D., D.O., ARNP, or PA.) authorized to practice in the State of Washington, including the physicians license number.