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New York's Religious Exemption from Immunization has been Eliminated

Dear Community Members,

In response to the spike in cases of measles in New York and other states, New York has eliminated the religious exemption from immunization. Effective immediately, parents/guardians may no longer seek to have their child(ren) exempted from New York's school and day care immunization requirements on account of a sincerely held religious belief.

Based on this change to the law, Tuckahoe schools will have no choice but to exclude students from school who have not met all immunization requirements. The law provides a period during which a student who has not yet received all required immunizations may continue to attend school, so long as the family can demonstrate that the student has received at least the first dose of each required immunization series and has age-appropriate appointments scheduled to complete each series.

The New York State Department of Health, Office of Children and Family Services and Education Department issued joint guidance explaining the change in the law and deadlines for vaccination to avoid a school or day care facility having to exclude children from attendance. For children already attending public, private or parochial school, in pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade, or attending child day care, each child must receive the first dose in each immunization series by **June 28, 2019** to continue attending. In addition, by **July 14, 2019**, the parents/guardians of affected children must show that they have made appointments for all required follow-up doses. For children not starting school until **September, 2019**, each child must receive the first dose in each immunization series within **fourteen days** from the first day of school, and, within **thirty days of the first day of school**, show that they have made appointments for all follow-up doses.

In order to assure continuity of attendance and instruction for all our students, we encourage parents/guardians of children who have previously received or who planned to request religious exemption from immunization to begin to get their children up to date on required immunizations as soon as possible.

According to the web site of Westchester County, its Department of Health provides free immunizations for students who are uninsured or whose insurance does not cover immunization. You can call for information at (914) 995-5800 or view the following link: <https://health.westchestergov.com/immunizations>.

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