

The Jewish Center

Vaccination Policy for the Religious School

Values Statement

The Jewish Center of Princeton believes that we have a responsibility to provide a safe environment for our congregants, especially our children, as well as to protect the public health for everyone who enters our buildings. This belief is consistent with Jewish values, particularly the traditional admonition to practice *pikuach nefesh*, meaning to value human life and well-being above all else, and Maimonides' assertion that we are required to take proactive measures to mitigate a foreseeable harm. Jewish values also call upon us to especially protect the youngest and most defenseless, for "if one does not do so, one is like one who sheds blood" (Rabbi Nachman of Bratslov). Based on research on vaccinations and Jewish law, reliable Jewish sources, including TJC's Rabbi Feldman, state that "there are no valid Jewish religious grounds to support refusal to immunize as a general principal".

For individuals of all ages, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommend routine vaccination to prevent the spread of vaccine-preventable diseases. Extensive medical research indicates that widespread vaccination is critical to successfully prevent the transmission of certain serious illnesses. In the U.S., strong adherence to vaccination programs has successfully eliminated many vaccine-preventable diseases, and dramatically reduced the incidence of others. But recently, reduced vaccination rates in some communities have led to outbreaks of serious illnesses, including whooping cough and measles.

Importantly, broad vaccination of healthy individuals is essential to protect the health of those who are immunocompromised, including children who cannot be vaccinated on schedule due to underlying health problems, as well as the very young and very old.

Based on both Jewish values, and public health evidence, The Jewish Center believes strongly that all members of the congregation (including children, adolescents, and adults) as well as all teachers, staff, children in the Religious School, and others who regularly frequent the synagogue, should be vaccinated.

Policy

As the risk of the disease transmission is greatest by far among unvaccinated children, The Jewish Center requires that all children attending the religious school be vaccinated according to the New Jersey state schedule, unless they are unable to do so for documented medical reasons.

Parents or guardians are required to indicate on their child's enrollment form for The Jewish Center Religious School that a child has been vaccinated according to the New Jersey state vaccination schedule. New Jersey's immunization requirements are in accordance with the

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guidelines of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), the American Academy of Family Physicians, and CDC/Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP). Further, The Jewish Center strongly encourages children to receive the annual flu vaccine by December 31st of each calendar year.

The only exception to this policy is on medical or religious grounds. To receive a medical exemption, parents must submit a doctor's note to The Jewish Center's Director of Congregational Learning. To receive a religious exemption, parents must meet with The Jewish Center's Rabbi. For further questions on this policy or to speak with our Rabbi, please contact the Director of Congregational Learning. Medical exemptions will be reviewed annually.

Current students whose vaccination status is not up to date according to the New Jersey state schedule may remain in The Jewish Center's Religious School if, and only if, they demonstrate progress towards fully compliant vaccination status according to ACIP's Recommended Catch-Up Schedule (<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/schedules/downloads/child/0-18yrs-child-combined-schedule.pdf#page=3>).

For the purposes of this policy, Religious School will be defined as any tuition paying program that requires registration, including but not limited to Yad b'Yad, Ganon, Gan Katan, and students enrolled from kindergarten through 12th grade. Due to the public nature of youth group events, participants are not required to confirm that they have been vaccinated in order to participate, although vaccination is strongly encouraged.

Accordingly, all TJC staff and teachers must be up to date with all vaccinations, including but not limited to the flu vaccine, prior to December 31 of each calendar year.