

# More parents are filing conscientious exemption to opt out of state-mandated vaccines

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Texas requires school children to get vaccines prior to kindergarten and seventh grade.

AUSTIN, Texas — More people are opting out of giving their kids state-mandated vaccines.

Texas requires kindergarten school children to get DTaP (diphtheria, tetanus and acellular pertussis), hepatitis A, hepatitis B, MMR (measles, mumps and rubella), polio and varicella (chickenpox).

Seventh-grade students must have Tdap (tetanus, diphtheria and acellular pertussis), hepatitis A, hepatitis B, MCV4 (meningococcal conjugate), MMR (measles, mumps and rubella), polio and varicella (chickenpox).

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Parents and guardians can file an exemption with the state if they don't have their child vaccinated. Exemptions may include [conscientious reasons and medical needs](#).

Texas Department of State Health Service records show exemptions have risen over the [last five years](#). A total of 91,026 had a conscientious exemption on file at their school [last year](#).

Texas surveyed more than 5.2 million schoolchildren. The [report shows](#) the percentage of a student missing at least one vaccine is at 1.73% across the State.

The rate is higher in Central Texas.

In Travis County, the rate is 2.09% for students who do not have one or more vaccines. Schools in Williamson County have 2.87% of children exempted. Schools in Hays County show 2.09%.

“We've seen that in past years in Texas, when we had small outbreaks in areas, those outbreaks are aligned with areas that have lower vaccination rates,” Hill Powell, interim executive director for The Immunization Partnership said.

DSHS report shows, “This increase in delinquency rates could be due to the COVID-19 pandemic and parents delaying childhood immunizations because of safety concerns. Furthermore, since many schools conducted classes virtually, some of these numbers may not reflect the true coverage for the 2020-2021 school year.”

“There are a myriad of reasons why there was a decline. We just want to encourage parents to get their children vaccinated. Health care provider offices there to maintain safety

measures. They're going through the protocols to ensure their offices are safe and to prevent the spread of COVID-19," Powell said.

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