



# VACCINES PREVENT INFECTIOUS DISEASE OUTBREAKS

## Higher vaccination rates can protect vulnerable Texans from infectious diseases.

In 2017-18, Texas faced unprecedented public health and infectious disease obstacles, with Hurricane Harvey, the influenza epidemic, and multidrug-resistant organisms. Vaccines are a safe and cost-effective way to prevent or mitigate infectious diseases. However, as immunization rates wane and these diseases remain a threat, Texas must protect its most vulnerable populations.



### FIRST RESPONDERS

To do their job safely, first responders must be vaccinated against serious infectious diseases. Unfortunately, during Hurricane Harvey, many first responders were unaware of their vaccination status and thus received precautionary but potentially unnecessary tetanus shots. Texas' limited vaccine supply was depleted, with less vaccine available for residents exposed to dangerous floodwaters. Texas must be better prepared to protect those who protect us when disaster strikes again.



### NONMEDICAL EXEMPTIONS

In 2018, 56,738 nonmedical school vaccine exemptions were issued in Texas, a 2,300-percent increase in exemptions issued since 2003.<sup>1</sup> Childhood vaccines are safe, cost-effective, and proven to protect children from potentially deadly infectious diseases. Polling shows that Texans, no matter their political party, overwhelmingly support strong childhood vaccine laws.<sup>2</sup>



### LONG-TERM CARE RESIDENTS

Aging Texans are among the most vulnerable to influenza outbreaks, especially those who live in long-term care facilities.<sup>3,4</sup> They also are more susceptible to infection by multidrug-resistant organisms,<sup>5</sup> which cannot be treated with antibiotics. The consequences can be deadly.

IN THE 2017-18  
FLU SEASON  
**11,917**  
TEXANS DIED  
BECAUSE OF  
THE FLU

**76%**<sup>3</sup>  
WERE AGE  
**65+**

## THE TEXAS PUBLIC HEALTH COALITION RECOMMENDS:

1. **Support HB 1256, HB 1418, SB 829, and SB 830 to protect first responders against vaccine-preventable infectious disease** by enabling access to their own up-to-date immunization status during a disaster and requiring their employers to establish protective infection control policies.
2. **Support SB 329 granting parents the right to access de-identified immunization data for their child's school.** This is essential information for the parents of medically fragile children.
3. **Support HB 1848/HB 1360** to define the conditions of reportable flu and multidrug-resistant organism infection outbreaks and improve long-term care facility infection control.
4. **Support HB 1423/HB 1361** to improve tracking and accessibility of long-term care facility resident and employee aggregate immunization data.
5. **Oppose any effort to weaken school vaccination requirements or exemption tracking, including HB 1490.**



# The Texas Public Health Coalition is a coalition of health professional organizations and health-focused organizations dedicated to disease prevention and health promotion.

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## MEMBERS

Alzheimer's Association  
American Heart Association  
Blue Cross Blue Shield of Texas  
Children's Hospital Association of Texas  
The Cooper Institute  
Harris County Public Health  
The Immunization Partnership  
March of Dimes  
Methodist Healthcare Ministries  
Texas Academy of Family Physicians  
Texas Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics  
Texas Academy of Physician Assistants  
Texas Association of City & County Health Officials  
Texas Association of Community Health Centers  
Texas eHealth Alliance  
Texas Health Institute  
Texas Hospital Association  
Texas Medical Association  
Texas Nurses Association  
Texas Oral Health Coalition, Inc.  
Texas Osteopathic Medical Association  
Texas Pediatric Society  
Texas Physicians for Social Responsibility  
Texas Public Health Association  
Texas Renal Coalition  
Texas School Nurses Organization  
Texas State Alliance of YMCAs  
United Ways of Texas

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## RESOURCES

CANCER PREVENTION AND RESEARCH INSTITUTE OF TEXAS  
MD ANDERSON CANCER CENTER

MICHAEL AND SUSAN DELL CENTER FOR HEALTHY LIVING  
PARTNERSHIP FOR A HEALTHY TEXAS

TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF STATE HEALTH SERVICES

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## REFERENCES

- 1 Vaccination Coverage Levels in Texas Schools. Texas Department of State Health Services. [www.dshs.texas.gov/immunize/Coverage/Schools/](http://www.dshs.texas.gov/immunize/Coverage/Schools/).
- 2 Survey: GOP Voters Overwhelmingly Support Child Immunization Laws. Texas Medical Association. July 24, 2018. [www.texmed.org/TexasMedicineDetail.aspx?id=48190](http://www.texmed.org/TexasMedicineDetail.aspx?id=48190)
- 3 Texas Department of State Health Services, 2017-2018 Texas Influenza Surveillance Activity Report, October 2018, [www.dshs.state.tx.us/IDCU/disease/influenza/surveillance/2017-2018-Texas-Influenza-Surveillance-Activity-Report.aspx](http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/IDCU/disease/influenza/surveillance/2017-2018-Texas-Influenza-Surveillance-Activity-Report.aspx).
- 4 Texas Department of State Health Services, 2017-18 surveillance data from the Division for Laboratory and Infectious Diseases Services.
- 5 van Buul, Laura W., et al. Antibiotic use and resistance in long term care facilities. *Journal of the American Medical Directors Association* 13.6 (2012): 569-e1.