

TEXAS MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

Ensure Access to Vaccinations for All Texans



March 2015

TMA's Healthy Vision 2020 Agenda

Vaccinations are one of the safest and most cost-effective ways to prevent many deadly infectious diseases, individual illness, and community outbreaks. Texas needs to have a strong immunization system supported by key vaccination requirements to help protect Texans from diseases, including those who are unable to receive vaccines, especially today in the presence of emerging infectious diseases. Unfortunately, vaccination exemptions based on philosophical reasons, convenience, or misinformation put more people at risk.

- Strengthen Texas' immunization registry (ImmTrac) by making the consent process opt-out.
- Change ImmTrac requirements to maintain vaccination records for consented children.
- Enable parents, physicians, and public health officials to have access to deidentified vaccination exemption information for local schools (Patients Right to Know).
- Oppose legislative attempts that create more onerous and burdensome red tape for physicians providing vaccinations.
- Support additional funding for the Department of State Health Services Adult Safety Net program.



Physicians Caring for Texans

TMA Supports

- HB ____ by Rep. Myra Crowover (R-Denton) — supports parents' right to know about student vaccination coverage and exemptions in their child's school.
- HB 465 by Rep. Donna Howard (D-Austin) and SB 29 by Sen. Judith Zaffarini (D-Laredo) — change ImmTrac from an opt-in system to an opt-out system.
- HB ____ by J.D. Sheffield, DO (R-Gatesville) — changes ImmTrac requirements to store childhood vaccination records until age 26.

Patient and Physician Platform

- For every dollar spent on childhood vaccination, we save a minimum of \$10 in direct and indirect costs, such as hospitalization, lost work time, disability, and disease outbreak investigations.
- Recent outbreaks of measles and pertussis underscore the importance of increasing Texas' adult vaccination coverage. The state's Adult Safety Net program provides free vaccines for uninsured and underinsured adults in Texas who are aged 19 and older, but not all can be served.
- Texas' immunization registry, ImmTrac, is opt-in; individuals must inform the state they want their vaccination information in the registry. Currently when a child turns age 18, his or her vaccination records are deleted unless that person provides permission and opts in again (before turning 19) for the records to stay in ImmTrac. Texas should support families who choose early to keep their children's records in ImmTrac through early adulthood.
- Texas is one of only 20 states that allow an individual or a parent of a child to exempt themselves from a required school or work vaccination solely for a personal belief. Most states only allow vaccination exemptions based on medical contraindications or religious reasons. Parents, local health departments, and school districts should have access to vaccination exemption information to better plan and implement vaccination efforts in those areas of the state at risk of vaccine-preventable diseases.
- Recognizing the need for medical exemptions, TMA opposes other personal (nonreligious) exemptions. Children are at highest risk of communicable infectious disease. Government policies should not seek to resolve issues surrounding vaccination exemptions by increasing the bureaucratic burden and cost on practicing physicians.



Healthy Vision 2020