Immunization Policy of the Diocese of Lincoln

Pursuant to Nebraska law, all students enrolling in a public or private school must provide written proof of certain immunizations or obtain a state-mandated medical exemption or religious exemption. (See Neb. Rev. Stat. §§ 79-217 through 79-223).

All Students
Nebraska law requires that every student must be protected against Measles, Mumps, Rubella, Poliomyelitis, Diphtheria, Pertussis, and Tetanus by immunization prior to enrolling in a public or private school in Nebraska.

Students enrolling for the first time (kindergarten or moving from another state or homeschool) in a Catholic school are considered immunized for purposes of Nebraska law if they have received the following:

- 3 doses of DTaP, DTP, DT, or Td vaccine (one given on or after the 4th birthday);
- 3 doses of Polio vaccine;
- 2 doses of MMR vaccine;
- 3 doses of Hepatitis B vaccine; and
- 2 doses of Varicella vaccine.

Seventh (7th) Grade Students
Every student entering the seventh grade shall have a booster immunization containing Diphtheria and Tetanus toxoids and an acellular Pertussis vaccine (also known as a Tdap booster).

Required Evidence of Immunization
For purposes of compliance with the immunization requirements, parents/legal guardians must provide the school administration with written record of immunization history which includes the name of the vaccine and the month, day, and year of administration.

Laboratory evidence of circulating antibodies for measles, mumps, or rubella constitutes evidence of immunity against those diseases provided the following information is supplied: (1) name of laboratory; (2) date of test; (3) name of test; (4) test result; (5) signature of laboratory technician performing the test or the laboratory director; and (6) date of signature. For purposes of compliance with this policy, clinical history of Measles, Mumps, or Rubella without laboratory or epidemiologic confirmation does not constitute evidence of immunity.

A documented history of Varicella disease from a parent or health care provider with the year of infection constitutes evidence of immunity to Varicella. Parents/legal guardians submit Appendix A Documentation_of_Varicella_Disease.pdf

Provisional Enrollment
A student may be provisionally enrolled in a Catholic school of the Diocese of Lincoln if he or she has begun the state-mandated immunizations prior to enrollment and continues the necessary immunizations as rapidly as is medically feasible.
A student is considered to have begun immunizations against Polio, Diphtheria, Tetanus, Pertussis, Hepatitis B, Measles, Mumps, Rubella, and Varicella if she/he has had at least one dose of DTaP/DTP/DT/Td, one dose of hepatitis B, one dose of either trivalent OPV or one dose of IPV, either one dose of the combined Measles, Mumps, and Rubella vaccine or one dose of each vaccines for Measles, Mumps, and Rubella, and one dose of Varicella vaccine. The time interval for the completion of all required immunizations must not exceed nine months.

State Law Exemptions
Nebraska law includes the right to an exemption from immunization requirements under a (1) medical exemption; or (2) religious exemption.

Medical Exemption
In order for a student to receive a medical exemption from the immunization requirements to attend public or private school in Nebraska, the student's parents/legal guardian must provide the following to school administration:

> *A statement signed by a physician, a physician assistant, or an advanced practice registered nurse practicing under and in accordance with his or her respective certification act, stating that, in the health care provider's opinion, the immunizations required would be injurious to the health and well-being of the student or any member of the student's family or household;*

Parents/legal guardians asserting a medical exemption must submit a completed Refusal of Immunization for Medical Reasons in the form is linked in Appendix B MedicalExemptionFromVaccinationRequiredForSchoolAttendance.pdf.

Religious Exemption
Any parent/legal guardian seeking a religious exemption from state-mandated immunizations on behalf of their minor children must submit to school administration Appendix C Affidavit - Refusal of Immunization of Student for Religious Reasons.pdf. The Affidavit must include the religious faith of the student and an acknowledgment that the parent or guardian has read Appendix D Integrating One's Catholic Faith and Sincerely Held Religious Beliefs into Medical Decision-making.pdf. Schools in the Diocese of Lincoln follow state law related to the state-mandated religious exemption, including recognizing such exemptions sought by Catholic families.

Teachings of the Catholic Church on Vaccinations

- The magisterium of the Catholic Church has encouraged and promoted the practice of immunization by vaccination.
- The magisterium of the Catholic Church has taught that vaccines derived from cells or tissues obtained after abortions *may* be used when grave reasons justify an individual's use of such vaccines. For example, danger to the health of children could permit parents to use a vaccine which was developed using cell lines of illicit origin, provided users of such vaccines (and all Catholics) make known their disagreement and ask the health care system to make other types of vaccines available. (See *Instruction Dignitas Personae* no. 35, 2008)
- In *Note on the Morality of Using Some Anti-Covid-19 Vaccines* (2020), the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith stated: "*Practical reas*on *makes evident that vaccination is not, as a rule, a more obligation and that, therefore, it must be voluntary*."
- The Catholic Church teaches that conscience plays an indispensable role in human action. (See *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1992, nos. 1776-1794)
- Consistent with Catholic moral tradition and magisterial teachings, Catholics can reach a prudential and certain judgment, after proper formation of conscience through education, prayer, and seeking appropriate counsel, that accepting a particular vaccine is morally wrong. If someone reaches this judgment, he or she is obliged to obey his or her conscience.

Exclusion from School

Students who have been granted an exemption may need to be excluded from school if there is an outbreak of a vaccine-preventable disease. As an example, students who receive an exemption from the Measles immunization requirement may be excluded from school for 21 days from the most recent date of exposure. The school will make reasonable efforts to assist excluded students with completion of schoolwork but are not required to provide distance learning or other accommodations which are beyond the resources or capabilities of the school.

Policy Revision

This policy is subject to revision at the discretion of the Catholic Diocese of Lincoln, under the direction of the Bishop of Lincoln.