



Measles Vaccinations and Outbreaks: Guidance for Schools

In response to the recent measles outbreak, Prizmah:Center for Jewish Day Schools hosted a webinar on independent school vaccination policy requirements for heads of school: [Vaccinations: What Policies Must Private Schools Adopt?](#) (Note: If you are head of school who is not yet a participant in the Reshet Head of School peer-to-peer learning community, [join the Reshet](#) to gain access to this recording and resources.)

NAIS Information

When there are measles outbreaks and resulting media coverage, many schools will have questions about responding to queries from families and news sources. State laws and local regulations govern most issues related to measles outbreaks and vaccinations, but the following pointers might be helpful to school leaders who are grappling with the issue.

About Measles

Measles is a highly contagious virus that infects approximately 90 percent of non-immunized people who are exposed to it. Individuals infected with measles are contagious before they show symptoms, making controlling it very difficult. Symptoms range in severity, but the virus can lead to encephalitis or even to death. From January 1 to April 4, 2019, 465 individual cases of measles were reported across 19 states. Although measles had been considered eliminated from the United States in 2000, the virus has re-emerged multiple times since then.

Action Steps

- Continuously track the spread of measles.
- Know the vaccination requirements of your state (found [here](#)) and your school's ability to require vaccinations. Be clear in your policies and reasoning.
- Learn which entities within your state will step in and provide guidance in the event of an outbreak locally. Such entities may require specific steps from your school, including disclosures, reports to the state, certain temporary closures, or excluding vulnerable students.
- Know the public disclosure laws that may require the school to release information about vaccination rates to those who inquire. Be prepared for inquiries from news sources in the event that you must disclose this information.

- Create a communication plan for parents on the issue. Include any relevant information including the school's policy, how the school is monitoring the situation, what the school's reaction will be (to the extent you can reasonably know) in the event of an outbreak, and other relevant information. Be careful not to divulge personal information about students.
- Proactively reach out to parents whose students are not vaccinated, including both parents who have made a choice not to vaccinate and those parents whose students are not vaccinated for medical reasons.
- Think through any employee-related issues and develop any necessary policies for implementation.
- Stay abreast of national and local laws in this area.

--

Additional Resources

Statements from rabbinic organizations: [OU](#), [Agudat Israel](#), [URJ](#)

CDC, "[Measles – Q & A](#)," "[Public Health Resources](#)"

For more information about the legal implications of school policy around vaccination, feel free to contact Professor Hillel Levin, University of Georgia School of Law: hillellevin@gmail.com.