

RECOMMENDED SCHOOL DISTRICT PROCEDURES for Implementing Requests for Religious Exemption to Immunization

1. Upon request, the school nurse or principal's designee will issue to the parent/guardian seeking a religious exemption to immunization for his or her child the *Request for Religious Exemption to Immunization Form–Parent/Guardian Statement*, will provide the parent/guardian with Centers for Disease Control/NYS Department of Health informational immunization materials, and also will provide guidance if requested for the form's completion. The parent/guardian is encouraged to meet with the school nurse or principal's designee for this purpose; however, a meeting is not required.
2. The parent/guardian will return the signed and notarized form to the school nurse or principal's designee. The form must be signed by the parent/guardian **and** notarized by a notary public, or it will not be accepted for review and will be returned to the parent/guardian for completion.
3. **The building principal will be responsible for the review of each request for a religious exemption to immunization.** If, after review of the parental/guardian statement, questions remain about the existence of a sincerely held religious belief, Department of Health regulation [10 NYCRR, Section 66-1.3(d)] permits the principal to request supporting documents. Some examples include:
 - A letter from an authorized representative of the church, temple, religious institution, etc. attended by the parent/guardian, literature from the church, temple, religious institution, etc. explaining doctrine/beliefs that prohibit immunization (Note: Parents/guardians need not necessarily be a member of an organized religion or religious institution to obtain a religious exemption);
 - Other writings or sources upon which the parent/guardian relied in formulating religious beliefs that prohibit immunization;
 - A copy of any parental/guardian statements to healthcare providers or school district officials in a district of prior residence explaining the religious basis for refusing immunization;
 - Any documents or other information the parent/guardian may be willing to provide that reflect a sincerely held religious objection to immunization (for example: disclosure of whether parent/guardian or other children have been immunized, parent/guardian's current position on allowing himself or herself or his or her children to receive or refuse other kinds of medical treatment.)
4. The parent/guardian may request a meeting with the principal in order to provide further information about his or her sincerely held religious beliefs.
5. The parent/guardian **must be informed in writing** by the building principal regarding the approval or denial of the exemption request with copies to the school nurse or principal's designee and the school superintendent. **If the request is denied, the parent/guardian notification letter must include the specific reason(s) for denial.**
6. If a request for a religious exemption is denied, a parent/guardian may appeal the denial to the Commissioner of Education within thirty (30) days of the decision, pursuant to Education Law, Section 310.