

Dear Parent,

You have indicated religious exemption in your child's immunization records related to:

Student's name: _____ for _____ Immunization.

Health Assessment #7050

Every student up to the age of nine years who has not been previously enrolled in the state, prior to admission and attendance, shall present the results of a health assessment to the local school office.

Immunization #7060

Any student entering a Catholic school in the Archdiocese of Kansas City in Kansas for the first time, when such enrollment is also the first enrollment in a school in Kansas, shall present to the Principal or designee official proof that he/she has completed, or is in the process of completing tests and inoculations as are deemed necessary by the Secretary of the State Department of Health and Environment. Failure to have these tests and inoculations or complete them in a timely manner shall be deemed non-compliance, and schools may reserve the right to deny admittance. Before making a decision regarding school admittance, principals shall consult with the Superintendent of Catholic Schools.

Exemptions from Immunizations #7060.

1 In general, government and school authorities may legally grant exemptions to immunizations for two reasons: medical and religious.

Medical – Schools should grant medical exemptions, provided that local public health authorities determine there is no public health risk in doing so and provided that parents present validation of medical issues certified by an appropriately recognized medical professional.

****Religious – Parents within the Archdiocese of Kansas City in Kansas may claim religious exemptions to immunization provided that they indicate they have read and understand the statement below.**

Archdiocese of Kansas City in Kansas Statement regarding Immunization This statement is meant to clarify in lay terms the position of the greater Church and specifically, this Archdiocese with regard to the immunization of children who are enrolled in Catholic schools within the Archdiocese.

In recent years, there has been growing resistance on the part of some parents to have their children immunized. Reasons for this resistance typically fall into two categories: 1. Medical concerns, and 2. Moral concerns. Resistance for medical concerns, with some individual exceptions, generally is focused on concerns related to potential harmful effects of the vaccines and/or desires to minimize the use of pharmaceuticals as a matter of course. Moral concerns are focused on the fact that certain vaccines are still derived from tissues from aborted babies.

The Church's position on medical concerns

After a thorough review of information from respected scientists and medical professionals, it seems clear that there are differing opinions regarding the harmful effects and efficacy of vaccines. However, it does appear that the prevailing opinion is that immunization, in general, is highly beneficial and has resulted in the reduction of disease and death among the population. Some have expressed concern that the prevailing opinion is based on faulty research sponsored by entities that have a vested interest in a particular outcome. However, the greater Church has expressed no issue to date with respect to the medical aspect of immunization, as the Church defers to experts in the medical and scientific fields on this topic. The Church staunchly supports sound medical research to improve treatment of disease as long as that research and any ultimate treatments are in keeping with the Church's moral teachings. The Church does recognize the right of individuals to form prudential judgments with regard to healthcare decisions affecting themselves and their children. Yet in making such decisions, individuals must take into account the common good, including the public health benefits of immunization. This theme of awareness of how decisions affect the larger community is a theme of Pope Francis' recent

encyclical, Laudato Si. In summary, while some Catholics cite medical concerns for not immunizing their children, these are personal opinions and not the official position of the Church.

The Church's position on moral concerns

The Church has grave concerns regarding the origins of certain vaccines. In particular, the Rubella and Chicken Pox vaccines are extremely problematic due to the fact that they were developed using material from aborted babies. However, Vatican and United States theologians have concluded that "Catholics may licitly accept vaccination for themselves and their children using a vaccine based on tissue from abortion or may refuse the vaccine 'if it can be done without causing children, and indirectly the population as a whole, to undergo significant risks to their health.'" (Conscience Exemption for Vaccines based on Fetal Tissue from Abortions, Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities, Released April 2007, Updated April 2015). They reached this conclusion based on 2 considerations: 1. Because some of these vaccines contain material from a strain that was developed in the past and no new aborted material is used; and 2. The potential danger to current unborn babies and young children from a population of unvaccinated persons may counterbalance the concern regarding the origin of the vaccines, particularly when considering that the individual who receives the tainted vaccination is not complicit in the abortion from which the vaccine was derived. However, the Church strongly urges those individuals who do accept such vaccines to do so "under protest," by actively voicing objection (see sample letter, Form #C141) to the manufacturers of such vaccines and also actively lobbying for the production of morally derived products.

Religious exemption based on an individual's well-formed conscience

As stated previously, the Church teaches that, presuming a properly formed conscience, "...man is obliged to follow faithfully what he knows to be just and right." (Catechism of the Catholic Church, para. 1778). Thus, the Archdiocese of Kansas City in KS grants the religious exemption to parents who choose not to vaccinate on the basis of honoring the conscience right of parents since there is no official stance on the part of the Church regarding immunization in and of itself (other than the obligation to vaccinate under protest if immunization with a vaccine using a cell-line derived from aborted fetal tissue is accepted). This exemption is in keeping with the recommendation of the Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops that states "...diocesan institutions show a willingness to grant the exemption along the lines recommended by the Academy [Vatican Pontifical Academy for Life]. In particular, in an area where public schools are granting a conscience exemption, based on the view of public health authorities that doing so does not pose a serious risk to the populations, Catholic institutions should be willing to do so as well." (Conscience Exemption for Vaccines based on Fetal Tissue from Abortions).

While the state of Kansas has eliminated the conscience exemption for families, it does still honor medical and religious exemptions for children attending public schools, with the caveat that certain circumstances may dictate that non-immunized children may be prohibited, either temporarily or for an extended period, from attending school. Catholic schools in the Archdiocese will grant exemptions with this caveat, as well.

****If you choose Religious Exemption for your child's immunization status, the archdiocese requires a written annual letter stating your decision and in that letter indicate the reason that you have read and understand the statement above.**

*****I have thoroughly read the above Kansas City Archdiocese policy on immunizations and request RELIGIOUS EXEMPTION. I understand that my child(ren) may be prohibited, either temporarily or for an extended period, from attending school based on any recent outbreaks of illness deemed concerning by the school and/or Archdiocese. *I also understand that I must read and sign this form on an annual basis and return to the school's Health Office.****

PARENT SIGNATURE _____

PARENT SIGNATURE _____

DATE _____