

## Personal Beliefs Exemptions FAQs

### 1. What were the main changes Senate Bill (SB) 277 (Pan, 2015) made to the immunization requirements for children entering child care or school?

Since January 1, 2016:

- Parents or guardians of students in any school or child-care facility, whether public or private, are no longer allowed to submit a personal beliefs exemption to a currently-required vaccine.
- Students are no longer required to have immunizations for entry if they attend:
  - a home-based private school or
  - an independent study program and do not receive classroom-based instruction.
- Students who have an individualized education program (IEP) should continue to receive all necessary services identified in their IEP regardless of their vaccination status.
- However, parents or guardians must continue to provide immunization records for these students to their schools, and schools must continue to maintain and report records of immunizations that have been received for these students.

### 2. When did SB 277 take effect?

January 1, 2016.

### 3. Where can I review SB277?

The language of SB 277 is available at:

[https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill\\_id=201520160SB277](https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201520160SB277).

### 4. Which facilities are affected by SB 277 in 2016 and future years?

Whether public or private, all California schools and child-care facilities, including child-care centers, day nurseries, nursery schools, family day care homes, and development centers, are subject to new and existing laws in California.

### 5. In SB 277, were religious beliefs distinguished from other personal beliefs?

No distinction is made between exemptions based on religious beliefs and other personal beliefs. Starting in 2016, exemptions for religious or other personal beliefs are no longer an option for the vaccines that are currently required for entry into school or child care in California.

## **6. Are personal beliefs exemptions filed during or after 2016 valid?**

No. Starting in 2016, personal beliefs exemptions are no longer an option for the vaccines that are currently required for entry into school or child care in California.

## **7. Are personal beliefs exemptions, including those based on religious beliefs, filed in California before 2016 valid in later years?**

Personal beliefs exemptions (PBEs) filed at a school or child-care facility before January 1, 2016 remain valid until the student enrolls in the next grade span, typically at kindergarten (or transitional kindergarten) or 7th grade.

A PBE filed before 2016 at:

- A child-care facility remains valid until the child first enters the span between transitional kindergarten through 6th grade.
- Entry to any grade from transitional kindergarten/kindergarten through 6th grade remains valid until the child completes 6th grade.
- Entry to any grade from 7th through 12th remains valid through 12th grade.

PBEs filed in 2014 and 2015 are only valid when signed by both an authorized health care practitioner and a parent/guardian no more than 6 months prior to first entry into school or child care or a new grade span (if the "religious beliefs" box was checked, then a practitioner signature was not required). Therefore, PBEs filed in 2015 are **invalid** for children first entering child care or school in California in the fall of 2016 or later years.

## **8. Is a personal beliefs exemption still valid if a child transfers between child-care facilities in California after 2015?**

Yes, a personal beliefs exemption filed with a child-care facility before January 1, 2016 is valid until entry into the next grade span (transitional kindergarten through 6th grade). Personal beliefs exemptions may be transferred between child-care facilities in California.

However, if the personal belief exemption documentation is no longer available, children must meet immunization requirements (see <http://www.shotsforschool.org/child-care/>) to attend the new child-care facility.

## **9. Is a personal beliefs exemption still valid if a student transfers between schools in California after 2015?**

Yes, a personal beliefs exemption filed with a school before January 1, 2016 is valid until entry into the next grade span (7th through 12th grade). Personal beliefs

exemptions may be transferred between schools in California, both within and across school districts.

However, if the personal beliefs exemption documentation is no longer available, students must meet immunization requirements (see <http://www.shotsforschool.org/k-12/>) or be enrolled in an independent study program and do not receive classroom-based instruction or in a home-based private school (see [question #1](#)).

**10. Is a personal beliefs exemption from another state or country valid if a student transfers to a California school in 2016 or future years?**

No.

**11. What if additional vaccines become required for child care or school?**

Personal beliefs exemptions will be allowed for any immunization requirement against additional diseases initiated by the California Department of Public Health.

**12. What will happen in future years when children with a prior personal beliefs exemption enter their next grade span in primary or secondary school (typically kindergarten or 7th grade)?**

Children with a valid personal beliefs exemption filed before 2016 who enter a new grade span will have to meet all age-appropriate immunization requirements for admission into primary or secondary school (K-12th grade) (see [www.shotsforschool.org/k-12/](http://www.shotsforschool.org/k-12/)) or be enrolled in an independent study program and do not receive classroom-based instruction or in a home-based private school (see [question #4](#)). Additional requirements for 7<sup>th</sup> grade will need to be met before entering 7<sup>th</sup> grade.

Therefore, in order to begin 7th grade, children who had a valid personal beliefs exemption filed before 2016 upon entry between kindergarten and 6th grade need to meet the requirements listed for grades K-12 as well as requirements for 7th grade listed at [www.shotsforschool.org/k-12/](http://www.shotsforschool.org/k-12/). They will need to provide documentation of having received the following doses of vaccines:

- **Diphtheria, Tetanus, and Pertussis containing vaccine (DTaP, DTP, DT, Tdap, or Td) – 3 doses** (consistent with [national recommendations](#) for children not immunized before age 7 years)  
–One dose of Tdap vaccine given on or after the 7th birthday will meet the 7th grade requirement and count as one of the 3 doses required for grades K-12
- **Polio (OPV or IPV) – 4 doses** (3 doses OK if 1 dose was given on or after 4th birthday)

- **MMR – 2 doses**
- **Varicella (chickenpox) – 2 doses**

For information on previous requirements for PBEs, click [here](#).