



The Episcopal Diocese of Olympia

The Episcopal Church in Western Washington

www.ecww.org

2020 Immunization Policies for the Diocese of Olympia

Adopted by Diocesan Council, July 2, 2020

1. All church and diocesan employees must provide proof of immunization (as described in *RCW 28A.210 and WAC 246-105-060*) on hiring as a condition of employment. A statement from a licensed physician or health care provider is acceptable evidence.
2. All church and diocesan volunteers working with children or youth must also provide proof of immunization (as described in *RCW 28A.210 and WAC 246-105-060*). A statement from a licensed physician or health care provider is acceptable evidence.
3. Any child or person under the age of 18 signing up for ongoing church activities – e.g., Sunday School, youth group, choir, or other activities sponsored by the church and/or any diocesan sponsored activities or events must have the parent or guardian provide evidence that each child has met state law about immunization for children and youth (*RCW 28A.210 and WAC 246-105-060*). Church registration or information forms must include this written verification from parents or guardians.
4. All congregations are strongly encouraged to make known the policy of The Episcopal Church regarding immunization and the limitation on exemption from immunization in the congregation's website, newsletter, and other written materials as appropriate.
5. All congregations are strongly encouraged to provide information about immunization to its members, including information about free immunization opportunities in its city, county, or region. If a congregation determines that it has volunteers or participating children or youth who cannot afford to be vaccinated or otherwise prove immunization evidence because of poverty, the diocese will provide funds to pay for vaccinations or other forms of immunization by request from the congregation.

Rationale for Proposed Policies

- The language of The Episcopal Church is clear. Vaccination or proof of immunization is not optional. Exemption from vaccination/immunization is limited to those individuals with evident health issues that prohibit such medical treatments. Congregations must safeguard the children and youth entrusted to the church by requiring evidence of immunization commensurate with public health laws. Just as the church has a moral, ethical, and legal obligation to safeguard its members against sexual and psychological abuse, so must it safeguard its members from the dangers of preventable diseases.

- We differentiate among those who must show evidence of immunization by the amount of contact individuals will have with children, youth, and each other. Individuals who attend church only will not be required to be vaccinated. Individuals who spend time with children, youth, and others, will be required to provide evidence of immunization because time and proximity increase the probability of transmission.
- Congregations that elect to operate schools or rent space to schools have additional responsibilities for the safety and health of the children and youth served. The current pandemic of 2020 underscores this concern about heightened safety and health practices.