

RELAXING CHILDHOOD VACCINE REQUIREMENTS COULD SIGNIFICANTLY INCREASE TEXAS HEALTH SPENDING



BACKGROUND: Childhood Vaccine Exemptions Are on the Rise

- Early childhood vaccinations are an essential reason why diseases that used to be common, including polio, measles and diphtheria, are no longer prevalent in the United States.
- Policies that could relax childhood immunization requirements are emerging across the country. These policies are associated with lower kindergarten immunization rates.
- During the 2020-21 school year, overall vaccination rates among kindergarteners in Texas school districts ranged from 33% to 99%.

CASE STUDY: Estimating the Cost of a Measles Outbreak

- Measles is one of the most contagious yet preventable childhood illnesses.
- When a child's probability of being exposed to measles reaches a rate of just one case in a community of 2,000 people, costs begin to increase dramatically for Texas' state budget.
- In the event of a measles outbreak, a community with a measles immunization rate of 30% would pay \$45.82 more per child for the medical care and public health responses than a community with an immunization rate of 97%.

- When applied to the population of 7.5 million children in Texas, the medical costs of a measles outbreak would range from \$15.5 million to \$63.3 million, and the costs of a public health response would range from \$115 million to \$410 million. (These state budget expenses do not include costs to private insurance or account for time or lives lost.)

THE TAKEAWAY: Decreased Immunization Rates Will Likely Lead to a Dramatic Increase in Health Spending During an Outbreak

- Policies that decrease childhood immunization rates will increase the likelihood of disease transmission and outbreaks.
- This could significantly increase state spending on otherwise preventable illnesses during an outbreak.

[Potential Cost Impacts of Relaxing Childhood Vaccine Requirements in Texas](#) (2022), authored by Heidi V. Russell, was presented during the [2022 Texas Vaccine Policy Symposium](#) at the Baker Institute for Public Policy on October 14, 2022.

For more information on vaccines, visit the Vaccines Cause Adults page at: bakerinstitute.org/vaccines-cause-adults.

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