



The Washington Flyer
October 28, 2022

“The people . . . are the only sure reliance for the preservation of our liberty.”
Thomas Jefferson

CDC Approves Recommendation for COVID-19 Vaccine for Children and Babies

Last week, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices, a 15-member committee of doctors and public health officials, [voted unanimously](#) to add the COVID-19 shot to the list of recommended vaccinations for children and babies. The decision came after the committee presented evidence in a public, online meeting discussing the alleged benefits of adding the COVID-19 shot to the immunization schedule. Dr. Matthew Daley stated that the vaccine’s “benefits continue to strongly outweigh the risks,” noting that, amid growing controversy over the vaccine for children, adding the vaccine to the immunization schedule was symbolic but “does not constitute a mandate” for states to follow. Dr. Nirav Shah echoed that argument, stating that the vote “does not constitute a requirement that any child receive the vaccine.” The committee heard a handful of public comments to close their discussion, most of which were supportive of adding the vaccine to the immunization schedule, before the committee’s unanimous vote in favor. The recommendation that children begin receiving their first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine at six months old drew [national attention](#) when Fox News anchor Tucker Carlson highlighted the decision on his program, stating that “the CDC is about to add the COVID vaccine to the childhood immunization schedule, which would make the vax mandatory for kids to attend school.” The CDC tweeted a response to Carlson’s segment, stating that “CDC’s independent advisory committee (ACIP) will vote on an updated childhood immunization schedule. States establish vaccine requirements for school children, not ACIP or CDC.” While technically correct that the CDC does not set vaccination requirements for children entering schools, many states follow CDC guidance on immunizations. Further, the committee unanimously recommended the vaccine [despite evidence](#) that children are already at very low risk of hospitalization or death from the virus and may not benefit from an annual vaccine.

Despite the CDC’s [assurances](#), experience shows that CDC recommendations do influence state decisions. In 2007, after the CDC recommended that school-age children receive the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination—another controversial recommendation that many parents objected to because HPV is a sexually transmitted infection—Hawaii, Rhode Island, Virginia, and Washington, D.C. enacted requirements that children receive that vaccine to attend school. Currently, [all states](#) require some level of vaccination for school-age children, with variations across the states on vaccinations for Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B, influenza, and HPV. [Most states](#), with the notable exceptions of California, Connecticut, New York, Maine, Mississippi, and West Virginia, also allow either religious exemptions or personal belief exemptions for families that object to vaccinating their children. In 2021, California and Louisiana became the first states to mandate a COVID-19 vaccine for children to return to in-person schooling, although the requirement was dropped after parents pushed back against the mandate; both states have indicated they will move ahead with adding the recommendation once the vaccine received full FDA approval. So far, [twenty-one states](#) have banned COVID-19 mandates for children. Parents and school leaders should check with their state and local health officials to learn whether their state intends to require the COVID-19 vaccine according to new CDC recommendations.

NAEP Scores Show Students' Math and Reading Proficiency Plummeted During School Shutdowns

The National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP) released the [results of the testing](#) for students in 4th and 8th grades, revealing that over the last two years, students have suffered the greatest learning loss in decades in the subjects of math and reading. Often referred to as the “nation’s report card,” the NAEP is conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics every two years for 4th and 8th graders in math and reading to determine the progress, or decline, in students’ learning nationwide. The math scores for 8th-grade students dropped 8 points, with only 26% of students scoring at a proficient level in math. For 4th-grade students, math scores dropped 5 points, with just 36% scoring proficiency in math. In reading, both 4th- and 8th-grade scores dropped 3 points, with 31% of 8th graders and 33% of 4th graders scoring at a proficiency. The last NAEP scores were released in 2019, prior to the pandemic and the consequent school shutdowns, mask requirements, remote learning, and limitations on social interaction for children. The regularly scheduled testing for 2021 was postponed a year due to the disruptions in education brought on by the pandemic. U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona [called the 2022 results](#) “appalling” and “unacceptable,” and for a solution to improve scores, pointed to more funding so public schools could hire “more teachers, tutors, and mental health professionals and expanding afterschool programs.” Dr. Lindsey Burke, director of Heritage Foundation’s Center for Education Policy, [pointed](#) to certain policies as the cause for the decline in student learning, such as the “school closures induced by teachers unions that required emergency remote instruction plus special interest groups’ preoccupation with radical gender ideology and critical race theory during this crisis.”

Indiana Court Removes Transgender Child from Parents' Care

Last week, the Court of Appeals in Indiana upheld a [ruling](#) by a lower court which had removed a transgender child from the home on grounds that the parents refused to accept the transgender identify of the child and that this refusal was causing emotional and physical harm to the child. The Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) [had reported](#) that the child was experiencing verbal and emotional abuse by the parents, and that contributed to the child suffering from an eating disorder. The parents had appealed the lower court decision, charging it violated their “constitutional rights to the care, custody, and control of Child, the free exercise of religion, and freedom of speech.” In the ruling, the Court of Appeals stated that the decision was not taking either the parents’ or the child’s side in the issue, and that the “ultimate goal is for family reunification.” The court noted, “There [have] always been issues where children do things that the parent[s] don’t agree with be it religiously or morally or whatever. That happens and that is not a reason to remove a child from the home.” However, the court then added that in this case, “there is a clear nexus between that issue and the medical and psychological issues that the child is having,” and that “because of those issues the child is a ward of DCS.” The court concluded that, because of the physical and emotional state of the child, removing the child from the home did not violate the parents’ rights nor their religious freedom: “The Parents have the right to exercise their religious beliefs, but they do not have the right to exercise them in a manner that causes physical or emotional harm to Child. Finally, we conclude that the trial court’s temporary restriction on the discussion of Child’s transgender identity outside of family therapy does not violate the Parents’ free speech rights.”

In Case You Missed It:

[Weekly Market Update](#) provided by Jeff Beach of the [AACS Investment Team at Merrill Lynch](#)

[Practical Legal Help for Christian Schools: ADF Ministry Alliance](#)

[Promise to America’s Children](#)

Voter Guides from [Pray Vote Stand](#) and [Million Voices](#)