

Parents not always choosing vaccinations for kids

By Tasneem Raja and Chris Mooney, Mother Jones

It's easy to find bad information about the safety of vaccines on the Internet. That's, well, the Internet. But what's scarier is that in many states, parents who buy into those myths can easily opt out of immunizing their children. In some cases, it's no harder than checking a box on a school form saying that vaccines are against their "personal beliefs."

In a 2012 study of vaccine exemption policies across the country, a team of researchers led by Saad Omer, a professor of public health at Emory University, found that of the 20 states that allowed personal belief exemptions for enrollment in a public school or child-care program, less than a third made it "difficult" to do so (for instance, by making parents re-apply for one each year, explain their beliefs in writing, or get a notarized letter of approval from a health care provider).

In the nine "easy" states identified in the study, the rules required only signing a form. Indeed, Omer suspects that some parents sign vaccine exemption forms not because they actually hold anti-vaccine beliefs, but simply because it's easier than juggling the doctors' appointments, missed work, and other inconveniences of getting kids vaccinated.

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