

Immunization law affects students in 2014-15

A California law that began Jan. 1 affects students entering child care or kindergarten, or advancing into the seventh grade, for the 2014-15 school year.

Assembly Bill 2109 changes the process for parents to request immunization exemptions for their children.

“The purpose of this new law is to better inform parents about the benefits and risks of immunizations,” Lynnann Svensson, supervising public health nurse with the El Dorado County Health and Human Services Agency, said in a press release.

The law also affects children transferring into California schools from another state or country.

Under AB2109, parents or legal guardians who choose to waive required immunizations must first meet with a health care provider to receive education about the benefits and risks of immunizations as well as the dangers of vaccine preventable diseases. The parent or legal guardian and the health care provider must sign the new personal belief exemption form.

“Childhood immunization rates have begun slipping over the last several years, while requests for immunization exemptions have increased,” Svensson said. “The personal belief exemption rate for kindergartners in El Dorado County is now 8.2 percent, while the overall rate in California is only 2.8 percent. Our concern is that as fewer children are immunized, we will begin to see large-scale and potentially serious disease outbreaks among school children and the community at large.”

Additional information, including questions and answers about AB2109, may be found online.