

# Vaccination rates up for Calif. kindergartners

By Phillip Reese, Sacramento Bee

More California kindergartners are getting their vaccinations before starting school, curbing a decadelong trend of falling immunization rates, new state figures show.

The shift comes as California experiences one of its worst whooping-cough outbreaks in generations. Health experts said several prior years of lax immunization primed the state for such an outbreak.

This year's rise in vaccination rates corresponds to the introduction of a new "personal belief" form that must be completed by parents who don't want to immunize their children. The result of a new state law, the form must be signed by a doctor who acknowledges telling parents about the risks and benefits of vaccinations; alternatively, parents can state that visiting a doctor violates their religious beliefs. The new form replaces a document that did not require a doctor's signature.

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