



Texas Catholic Conference of Bishops

THE PUBLIC POLICY VOICE OF THE CHURCH

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

REGULAR MEMBERS

† Daniel Cardinal DiNardo
ARCHBISHOP OF GALVESTON-
HOUSTON

+Gustavo García-Siller, M.Sp.S.
ARCHBISHOP OF SAN ANTONIO

+Patrick J. Zurek
BISHOP OF AMARILLO

+Joe S. Vásquez
BISHOP OF AUSTIN
APOSTOLIC ADMINISTRATOR
OF TYLER

+David L. Toups
BISHOP OF BEAUMONT

+Daniel E. Flores
BISHOP OF BROWNSVILLE

+W. Michael Mulvey
BISHOP OF CORPUS CHRISTI

+Edward J. Burns
BISHOP OF DALLAS

+Mark J. Seitz
BISHOP OF EL PASO

+Michael F. Olson
BISHOP OF FORT WORTH

+James A. Tamayo
BISHOP OF LAREDO

+Robert M. Coerver
BISHOP OF LUBBOCK

+Steven J. Lopes
BISHOP OF PERSONAL ORDINARIATE
OF THE CHAIR OF ST. PETER

+Michael J. Sis
BISHOP OF SAN ANGELO

+Brendan J. Cahill
BISHOP OF VICTORIA

CONSULTATIVE MEMBERS

ALL OTHER TEXAS BISHOPS

Jennifer Carr Allmon
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

January 23, 2024

Dear Superintendents and Catholic School Administrators,

The Texas bishops would like to provide further pastoral guidance on the rationale for the Texas Catholic Conference of Bishops Education Department's (TCCB ED) policy requiring that every student enrolled in Catholic schools accredited by the TCCB be immunized in accordance with the immunization schedule adopted by the Texas Department of State and Health Services. While conscientious objections or waivers are acceptable for attendance in public schools, we do not allow these waivers in Catholic schools in Texas [Atty. Gen. Op. GA-0420].

This has been our policy since 2009. We have been presented with appeals to reconsider the policy, which is reviewed and discussed every two years, most recently in November 2023, at which time the bishops of Texas once again reaffirmed the current policy. The basis for the current policy is rooted in the desire to protect the common good and to encourage the proportional benefits of utilizing the vaccines that we mandate in our Catholic schools.

Some have raised conscience objections based on the connections that some vaccines have with elective abortion. [The Pontifical Academy for Life](#) in 2017 released a document, written in collaboration with the Italian Bishop's Conference and the Association of Italian Catholic Doctors, called *Clarification on the Medical and Scientific Nature of Vaccination*. The 2017 document notes declining vaccination rates and encourages vaccinations and concludes, "We believe that all clinically recommended vaccines can be used with a clear conscience and that the use of such vaccines does not signify some sort of cooperation with voluntary abortion. While the commitment to ensuring that every vaccine has no connection in its preparation to any material originating from an abortion, the moral responsibility to vaccinate is reiterated in order to avoid serious health risks for children and the general population."

Although some parents choose to forgo vaccines developed from human cell lines illicitly procured, the Pontifical Academy for Life [2005] is clear in its analysis that one must inform one's conscience properly in this determination. The bishops have prayerfully discerned that for the protection of the other students, staff, and the unborn children of staff, they will not accept a moral rationale to refuse immunizations against dangerous contagious diseases, such as rubella, especially considering the obligation each person has for the health of all children, including unborn children, and the common good.

We understand that some Catholics may continue to disagree with this policy. We continue to pray and advocate for alternative vaccines, but until

those vaccines are developed, we cannot ignore the safety of all children and staff in our Catholic schools. In the Catholic moral tradition, we respect the rights of conscience, but those rights have corresponding responsibilities and parents are free to choose another educational setting if they do not wish to follow our vaccination policy.

A copy of the TCCB ED immunization policy is attached. If there are any questions regarding this policy, please contact Dr. Lisette Allen, Director of Education & Accreditation for the TCCB.

Yours in Christ,



Daniel Cardinal DiNardo
Archbishop of Galveston-Houston



Archbishop Gustavo García-Siller, M.Sp.S.
Archbishop of San Antonio



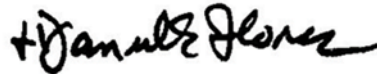
Bishop Patrick J. Zurek
Bishop of Amarillo



Bishop Joe S. Vásquez
Bishop of Austin
Apostolic Administrator of Tyler



Bishop David L. Toups
Bishop of Beaumont



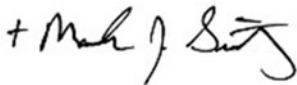
Bishop Daniel E. Flores
Bishop of Brownsville



Bishop William Michael Mulvey
Bishop of Corpus Christi



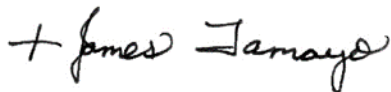
Bishop Edward J. Burns
Bishop of Dallas



Bishop of El Paso
Bishop Mark J. Seitz



Bishop Michael F. Olson
Bishop of Fort Worth



Bishop James Tamayo
Bishop of Laredo



Bishop Robert M. Coerver
Bishop of Lubbock



Bishop Steven Lopes
Bishop of the Ordinariate of the Chair of St. Peter



Bishop Michael J. Sis
Bishop of San Angelo



Bishop Brendan Cahill
Bishop of Victoria



Texas Catholic Conference of Bishops

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

IMMUNIZATION POLICY

Every student enrolled in a Catholic school in the state of Texas shall be immunized against vaccine preventable diseases caused by infectious agents in accordance with the immunization schedule adopted by the Texas Department of State Health Services. **A student who fails to present the required evidence shall not be accepted for enrollment.** Pharmacy vaccination records may be accepted from any US pharmacy so long as the records are sent directly to the school from the pharmacy.

Conscientious Objections

Catholic schools do not accept students who have received a parental choice or religious exemption from the immunizations required by Texas state law. **Conscientious objections or waivers, which may be permissible for attendance in public schools, do not qualify as an exemption in Catholic Schools in Texas.** (Atty. Gen. Op. GA-0420)

Exemption

The only exemption to the foregoing requirement is a medical exemption signed by a licensed physician (M.D. or D.O.) authorized to practice in the state of Texas.

Provisional Enrollment

All immunizations should be completed by the first date of attendance. The law requires that students be fully vaccinated against the specified diseases. **A student may be enrolled provisionally if the student has an immunization record that indicates the student has received at least one dose of each specified age-appropriate vaccine required by this rule.** To remain enrolled, the student must complete the required subsequent doses in each vaccine series on schedule and as rapidly as is medically feasible and provide acceptable evidence of vaccination to the school.

- **A school nurse or school administrator shall review the immunization status of a provisionally enrolled student every 30 days to ensure continued compliance in completing the required doses of vaccination.** If at the end of the 30-day period, a student has not received a subsequent dose of vaccine, the student is not in compliance and the school shall exclude the student from school attendance until the required dose is administered.

Pontifical Academy for Life Statement

The Pontifical Academy for Life rejects the claim that Catholics have a moral duty to refuse the rubella vaccine on the grounds of conscience and Catholic teaching. It encourages Catholic parents to vaccinate their children against rubella and other serious diseases despite the unfortunate origin of the cell lines used in the manufacture of vaccines. Therefore, immunizations are not in conflict with the Catholic faith. [The Pontifical Academy for Life, “Moral Reflections on Vaccines Prepared from Cells Derived from Aborted Foetuses”, 2005: +DEF].

This immunization policy was approved by the Texas Catholic Conference Accreditation Commission and endorsed by the Bishops of Texas in January 2009 and reaffirmed by the Bishops of Texas in April 2017, 2021, and 2023 with no changes.