

The Updated Federal Children's Vaccine Schedule

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In early January, following the yearly examination of the childhood vaccine schedule, the CDC released a major revamp of the recommended immunizations for ages 0-18. This reduced the number of routinely suggested vaccinations from 17 to only 11.

The following six vaccines are no longer on the schedule to be universally recommended: rotavirus, COVID-19, Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B, meningococcal, and influenza.

Effective immediately, the CDC stated that vaccines not included in the routine schedule are to be administered only on a "shared clinical decision-making" basis, meaning that a patient should consult with a healthcare professional before deciding what is right for them.

This change sparked

major disapproval among pediatricians across the country, including the American Association of Pediatrics (AAP), who immediately sent out a statement saying they found the new vaccine schedule to be "dangerous and unnecessary" when it was first released.

The AAP's vaccination recommendations have stayed consistent with the pre-January release, as they continue to endorse their more extensive list of 17 vaccines.

Additionally, many physicians and health experts are choosing to disregard the new guidelines, and have stated that since the science behind the vaccines hasn't changed, they will continue to advise their patients to do what is most beneficial to them based strictly on medical evidence. As a result, this break from federal recommendations is causing increased confusion and dwindling



Vaccine Administration A nurse prepares to give a vaccine. Photo via Creative Commons

confidence in medical professionals as parents are receiving conflicting messages about how to best protect their children.

This decision was made in order to align the policies of the United States with those of other developed countries, who recommend fewer childhood vaccines, and the federal advisory committee cited Denmark as a specific example. However, critics of this decision have argued News that the

demographics and healthcare system of Denmark are drastically different than those of the U.S., and their vaccine schedule is tailored to their specific needs, therefore what is best for their country is not guaranteed to be what is best for ours.

"Adopting [Denmark's schedule] would leave American children unprotected against diseases we have spent decades bringing under control," said Jake Scott, associate professor of infectious diseases at Stanford University, in an article about the differences between the disease burdens of each country.

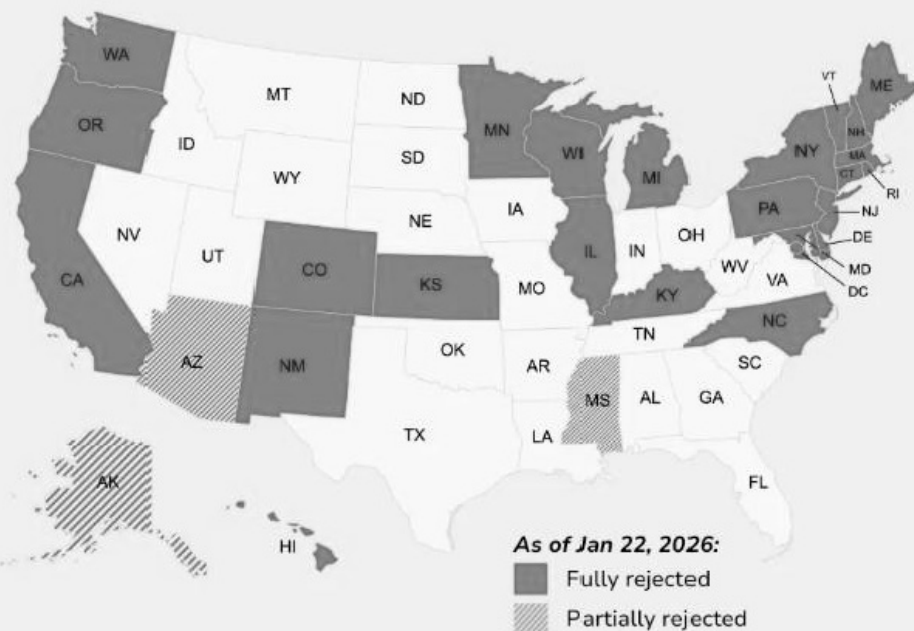
Similar concerns have been expressed as pediatricians and healthcare professionals consider the implications of falling vaccination rates that may come as a result of new guidelines. With reduced herd immunity, formerly rare diseases could reemerge and pose a significant threat to the American public. The movement of vaccines from "routine" to "shared clinical decision-making" (SCDM) may

also pose a barrier to accessing vaccinations for underserved communities. It is unclear whether insurance companies will continue to cover the vaccines that are no longer routine after 2026, and pharmacies and other medical practices may begin to have less of them in stock.

Furthermore, now that families have to ask for specific vaccines for their children, it may become increasingly difficult for those with transportation issues, scheduling conflicts, or unstable primary care sources to gain access to them if they are interested.

In terms of school immunization requirements, the federal guidance is not law, therefore it is still up to each state to decide whether they want to keep the stricter schedule or adopt the new one. Connecticut has kept its existing requirements for public school entry, which include Hepatitis A and B, even though they are among those deemed "SCDM" by the CDC.

The majority of states have rejected HHS's changes to the U.S. childhood vaccine schedule



US Map States that have rejected new vaccine schedule. Photo via Creative Commons