



NAPNAP Position Statement on Immunizations

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National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners (NAPNAP) supports the timely and complete immunization of all infants, children, adolescents, and adults to maximize the health and wellbeing of all people. Routine childhood immunizations prevent as many as three million deaths per year (World Health Organization [WHO], 2021). Despite this success, more than one and a half million people worldwide die from vaccine-preventable diseases each year (WHO, 2021).

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Committee on Infectious Diseases and the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practice (ACIP) meet at least three times a year and annually review and recommend routine vaccination for 17 vaccine-preventable diseases. The CDC sets the immunization schedules on the basis of ACIP's recommendations (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2021). The childhood and adolescent schedules are endorsed by NAPNAP and other interdisciplinary

stakeholder organizations, such as the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Academy of Family Physicians, and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (Wodi et al., 2021). NAPNAP recognizes that the best way to protect children and the community from vaccine-preventable infectious diseases is strongly encouraging parents to adhere to the recommended immunization schedule (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2018).

Nonmedical exemption rates have increased over the last two decades, with an increased risk of disease outbreaks in clusters of children with nonmedical exemptions because of differences in state laws (Bednarczyk, King, Lahijani, & Omer, 2019). Immunization exemptions erode progress made in community immunity provided by population-based vaccination programs and warrant careful and ongoing oversight to prevent vaccine-preventable disease outbreaks in the United States (Omer, Porter, Allen, Salmon, & Bednarczyk, 2018). Continued monitoring is needed to evaluate the impact of growing vaccine exemption rates to develop policies for childhood vaccinations across every state in the United States.

NAPNAP considers pediatric-focused advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs) to be in the position to inform parents of current immunization recommendations. Education must include the current, scientific, evidence-based information related to vaccine safety, risk, and benefits. Pediatric-focused APRNs should guide parents to trusted and reliable resources grounded in evidence and warn them about the sources and dangers of misinformation. Using a nonjudgmental approach, pediatric-focused APRNs are integral in providing parental education about the risks of nonadherence to the recommended vaccination schedules. NAPNAP encourages pediatric-focused APRNs to pursue opportunities to lead their communities by sharing vaccine information and promoting immunizations.

Conflicts of interest: None to report.

Adopted by the National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners' Executive Board on December 14, 2021. This document replaces the 2018 NAPNAP Position Statement on Immunizations.

All priority position statements from the National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners automatically expire 3 years after publication unless reaffirmed, revised, or retired at or before that time.

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Promoting vaccines should be done at the individual, local, state, national, and international levels. APRNs are encouraged to participate on committees at each level to address immunization policies and practices, including advocating for increased vaccine funding. To ensure that all pediatric populations are protected against vaccine-preventable illness and remain healthy, NAPNAP affirms that pediatric-focused APRNs and other pediatric health care providers must do the following:

Clinical practice:

1. Recommend and implement immunization practices according to the CDC immunization schedule and immediately incorporate any new changes to the immunization policies, recommendations, and practices into daily practice (Kroger, Bahta, & Hunter, 2021).
2. Recognize every opportunity to administer vaccines by reviewing the immunization status at each health care visit and vaccinate as indicated.
3. Empower all parents and caregivers to critically evaluate vaccine information by identifying reputable Web and social media sites.
4. Recognize vaccine-preventable diseases and be proficient in the ability to diagnose the illness. Implement disease-appropriate management on the basis of state and national guidelines (CDC, 2019). Prioritize and support epidemiological surveillance of community transmission of vaccine-preventable diseases.

Systems issues:

1. Ensure adherence to immunization schedules by using electronic health records, state-wide vaccine registries, and recall systems to promote age-appropriate, on-time immunization administration.
2. Implement immunization practices such as a callback system or integration of a notice in the electronic medical record to identify children who have missed vaccinations and notify the families of immunization visits.
3. Conduct quality improvement projects to evaluate immunization practices and determine effective office-based best immunization practices.

Advocacy:

1. Provide complete, accurate, and culturally responsive educational programs about immunizations to the public, childcare centers, schools, and community groups, including evidence-based information on benefits, safety, and the importance of active and timely participation in immunization programs.
2. Use news, radio, social media, and other applicable communication methods to influence and direct the conversation regarding immunization safety, efficacy, and necessity.

3. Counter vaccine misinformation and disinformation to the public to increase trust and confidence in vaccinations.
4. Lead policy change initiatives in the states that currently permit personal exemptions for school entry.
5. Engage in and support local, state, or federal legislation, policy, committee, or advisory group that aims to keep childhood immunizations available, accessible, and affordable for all children regardless of their socioeconomic status.
6. Support National Immunization Strategic plan 2021–2025 to eliminate the vaccine-preventable disease by supporting the development of vaccines, increasing knowledge and safety of vaccines, improving access and use of recommended vaccines, and supporting global immunization efforts (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2021).

NAPNAP fully supports emerging vaccines as recommended by the CDC/ACIP (including COVID-19 vaccines) and strongly advocates that parents immunize their children and themselves (per the recommendations of their health care providers) to protect children who by age or medical conditions, cannot be vaccinated. Furthermore, NAPNAP supports community outreach activities to provide full access to these vaccines for all populations, emphasizing vulnerable, high-risk populations, which may be subjected to misinformation and fears that drive undue vaccine hesitancy and vaccine refusal behaviors.

In summary, NAPNAP is an organization whose mission is to empower pediatric-focused APRNs and key partners to optimize child and family health and is committed to the health and wellbeing of all children and their families. NAPNAP recognizes the immense benefits of immunizations for children and the community as a whole. NAPNAP encourages pediatric-focused APRNs and other pediatric health care providers to consistently assess patient immunization status, limit missed opportunities to vaccinate, support immunization programs, advocate for and promote community awareness of the value of immunization of all children. Pediatric-focused APRNs are a valued health care resource and should advocate for the promotion of vaccinations through legislation and leadership in health care policy. Pediatric-focused APRNs are compelled to be informed clinicians, skilled communicators, strong leaders, advocates, and champions for evidence-based immunization programs. It is the position of NAPNAP that pediatric-focused APRNs and elected leaders at the local, state, and federal levels support legislative efforts to appropriate funds for comprehensive immunization delivery, for a national immunization registry, and to maintain the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System and other safety programs.

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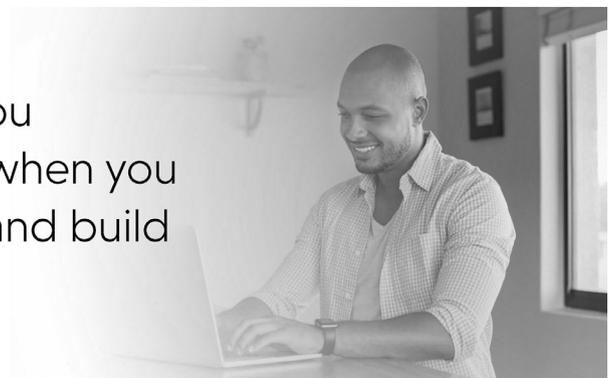
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