



**County
Health Officials
of New York**
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SUPPORTS

With Recommendations

A6961/S.4249 (Dinowitz/Skoufis)

AN ACT to amend the public health law, in relation to requiring children enrolled in an overnight, children's non-regulated, summer day, or travelling camp to be vaccinated

The New York State Association of County Health Officials (NYSACHO) supports, with recommendations, requiring children enrolled in an overnight, children's non-regulated, summer day, or travelling camp to provide proof of vaccination or medical exemption. Prior outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases at summer camps throughout the state have been attributed to unvaccinated campers or staff who attended the camps. Disease outbreaks continue to have a significant impact on the health of children, and result in substantial costs to parents, camps, and local and state governments.

Congregate camp settings increase the likelihood of exposure and transmission to communicable diseases. The 2019 measles outbreak was a source of great concern to public health officials, parents, and camp operators as the summer camp season approached, but was mitigated by local public health requirements regarding measles vaccination in high incidence areas. Ongoing transmission of vaccine-preventable diseases by unvaccinated can allow the spread of outbreaks to other communities throughout New York State. Unvaccinated individuals also pose a risk to those who cannot be vaccinated for medical reasons.

NYSACHO strongly supports the provisions of the bill that allow for medical exemption only to the proposed vaccine requirements. Non-medical exemptions result in lower overall vaccination rates, which pose a threat to the health both children and adults who are medically unable to be vaccinated, increase the risk of transmission of disease, and are also inconsistent with current state statute related to school immunization requirements.

NYSACHO strongly recommends that the bill be amended to also require vaccinations for camp employees. Camp counselors and staff are in contact with campers around the clock, and if unvaccinated, put campers at risk for contagious diseases. While many campers have been vaccinated under state school vaccination requirements, counselors from outside the state or country may not be vaccinated. Illness among counselors also poses a safety risk to maintaining appropriate staffing levels, which could require suspension, or closure of a camp. Past camp outbreaks have been associated with imported cases by staff from other countries or with a history of international travel.

NYSACHO additionally recommends that the bill language be amended to remove reference to specific diseases and instead reference all age-appropriate immunizations as recommended by the Center for Disease Control's Advisory Council on Immunization Practices (ACIP) and the New York State Department of Health. This will allow flexibility in keeping current with any new vaccine recommendations and will also include those vaccines that are only age-appropriate for older campers or counselors that are especially important in congregate settings, such as meningococcal vaccine.

For the reasons stated above, NYSACHO strongly supports this legislation, with the recommendations that immunization requirements apply to camp employees and bill language be amended to allow the proposed law to stay current with all age-appropriate recommended vaccines. These additional provisions will strengthen the public health protections to further reduce the risks of vaccine-preventable disease outbreaks in these high-risk congregate settings.

Contact: Sarah Ravenhall, Executive Director, sarah@nysacho.org