

# DOCTOR DAY 2019

## *Advocacy at the Capitol*



### Wisconsin Student Immunization Law

**Request for Legislators:** Eliminate the Personal Conviction exception option for school attendance vaccination requirements.

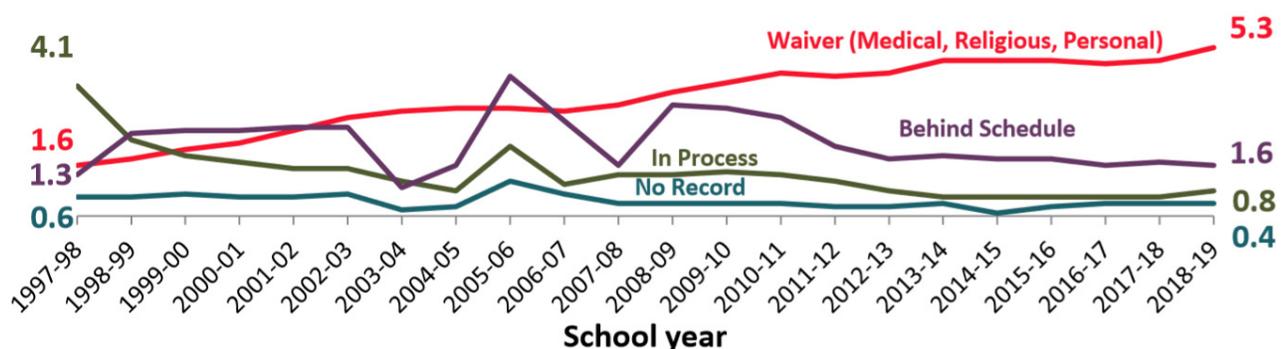
Current state law requires children attending school to be vaccinated against various diseases like measles, mumps, and polio. With often hundreds of kids in close proximity to one another for large amounts of time per day, virulent diseases can rapidly spread throughout a school, especially among unimmunized students – putting children’s health and even lives at risk.

While state law requires certain vaccinations, there are exceptions:

- Medical – when a vaccination could harm a child due to other health conditions.
- Religious – when a vaccination runs counter to a student’s or parents’ religion.
- Personal Conviction – a parent may simply check a box on a form to exempt their child.

Wisconsin is one of just 16 states allowing a personal conviction exception to required school vaccinations. Since the 1997-98 school year, the percentage of students requesting a medical or religious exemption has been relatively constant, while those requesting a personal conviction exception has grown from 1.2 percent of students to 4.6 percent of students in 2018-19.

**Percentage of Wisconsin Students in each Immunization Category\* by School Year<sup>1</sup>**



\*Not including met minimum immunization requirements.

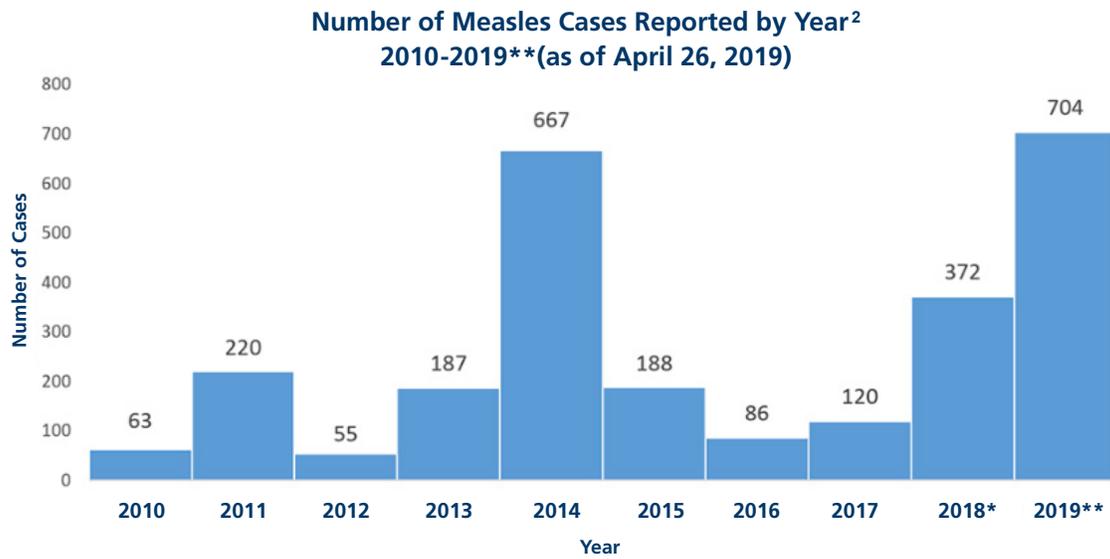
<sup>1</sup>Bureau of Communicable Diseases. Wisconsin school immunization rates 2018-2019 school year. <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/publications/p01894.pdf>. Wisconsin Department of Health Services publication P-01894. Revised April 2109. Accessed April 24, 2019.

This increase in personal conviction exceptions has led to an overall drop in the percentage of students who meet the minimum immunization requirements – the 91.9 percent figure for 2018-19 is the lowest rate in nearly 10 years and is nearing a level where “herd immunity” – the ability to slow or stop a disease’s spread because a supermajority of folks are immune to the disease – could be threatened.

Wisconsin School Immunization Rates <sup>1</sup>										
School Year	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Percent of students who met minimum immunization requirements	90.7%	90.8%	91.9%	92.6%	92.3%	92.5%	92.4%	92.5%	92.3%	91.9%

<sup>1</sup>Bureau of Communicable Diseases. Wisconsin school immunization rates 2018-2019 school year. <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/publications/p01894.pdf>. Wisconsin Department of Health Services publication P-01894. Revised April 2109. Accessed April 24, 2019.

As outbreaks of various diseases once thought to be eliminated continue to surge across the country, Wisconsin's public health could be under threat.



\*Cases as of December 29, 2018. Case count is preliminary and subject to change.

\*\*Cases as of April 26, 2019. Case count is preliminary and subject to change. **Data are updated every Monday.**

<sup>2</sup>Measles cases and outbreaks. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website. <https://www.cdc.gov/measles/cases-outbreaks.html>. Reviewed April 29, 2019. Accessed April 29, 2019.

Removing the personal conviction exception option from state law should help emphasize to parents and students how immunizations are a key element in protecting public health. This should prompt an increase in the student immunization rate and therefore protect immunized students, non-immunized students and the community.