

MID-MICHIGAN

Rates of vaccine waivers down from '14

2015 kindergarten immunization data reported by MDHHS

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As the school year draws near, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services is reminding residents that for most students up-to-date im-

munizations are a requirement, with some exceptions including medical or religious and philosophical waivers.

And while 2015 data shows the state has the 6th highest waiver rate for kindergartners at 3.1 percent, that number actually dropped from 2014, when kindergarten waiver rates in Michigan were at nearly 5 percent.

The MDHHS attributes that drop in an education requirement for those seeking to opt children out of required vaccine

schedules implemented in 2014.

Out of the 116,302 kindergartners enrolled in public and private Michigan schools in 2015, more than 4,200 received immunization waivers; only 244 for medical reasons, 744 for religious and the rest — more than three-quarters of exempted students — were for philosophical reasons.

In mid-Michigan, percentages vary dramatically from district to district.

In Isabella County schools,

there were 22 kindergartners with immunization waivers in 2015.

Morey Montessori Public School Academy had the highest percentage of kindergartners with waivers, at 23 percent, or three of the 13 students enrolled in 2015, one citing religious reasons while the other two were granted a philosophical waiver.

While not the highest percentage in the county, Shepherd Elementary School has the highest number of actual students with

waivers in one building at six; One third were medical waivers and the rest philosophical, according to MDHHS data.

In Mt. Pleasant public schools, Vowles and Pullen elementary schools had 6 waived students combined; four at Vowles and two at Pullen, two thirds of which were for philosophical reasons, the rest medical. Renaissance Public School Academy had four kindergarten waivers, 11 percent of the 2015 class.

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One student obtained a medical waiver while the other three religious waivers.

Sacred Heart Academy

had one kindergarten waivers for medical reason in 2015.

Both Beal City Public Schools along with St. Joseph the Worker had zero vaccine-exempt kindergarten students las year; the same was true for Winn Elementary and White Pine

Montessori.

In Gratiot County just three elementary schools — Carrie Knause Early Childhood Learning Center in St. Louis, Fulton Elementary School, and Luce Road Elementary School— had a total of 6 vaccination waivers in the county.

In St. Louis one medical waiver and one religious waiver were filed in a kindergarten class of 72 in 2015, according to MDHHS data while Fulton recorded just one religious waiver.

Within Alma city schools, all three remaining waivers in the county were for phil-

osophical reasons in 2015.

Each of the three elementary schools with kindergarten classes in Clare County recorded at least one immunization waiver last year.

Clare Primary School had the highest percentage at 5.4 percent, a total of five

out of six for religious or philosophical reasons.

Farwell's three waived kindergartners in 2015 were one each of medical, religious and philosophical.

Robert M. Larson Elementary School in Harrison had one religious waiver.