

MYTH: Health care providers must obtain parent consent under HIPAA to share child vaccination records with a state immunization registry**FACT: HIPAA does not prevent health care providers from sharing child immunization data with the state, but state law may allow parents to opt-out of sharing their child's information.**

Vaccine registries – or immunization information systems (IIS) – are now being used in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. These systems keep a record of all immunizations given to children, and some states also collect data on adult immunizations.

Parents may have the mistaken perception that HIPAA requires health care providers to obtain their consent before sharing their child's vaccination information with a state vaccination registry. While some states do allow parents to opt-out of sharing this information with a registry, HIPAA itself does not prevent providers from sharing patient immunization information, even if a parent does not provide consent.

HIPAA contains a public health exception that allows providers to share patient data with a public health agency when the information is needed for public health purposes, even if the patient does not consent. Because vaccine registries are maintained by the state for important public health purposes like tracking vaccination rates, providing patient information to a registry therefore does not require parent consent.

Although HIPAA does not prevent providers from sharing patient information with a vaccine registry, state law may give parents to opt out.

In the majority of states, parents have the ability to opt out of the registry, usually by instructing their healthcare provider not to submit their child's information to the registry, or by contacting the state health department to have their child's information removed from the registry at any time after it has been reported. However, there are twelve states (DC, DE, MO, MS, NC, NY, OR, NC, NY, SC, WV, and VT) in which providing patient vaccination information to the state registry is mandatory, regardless of whether a parent wants to participate.¹ In these states, parents do not have the ability to opt out of sharing their child's immunization information with the registry. Providers in these states are likely to treat collection of registry information as a routine matter of the child's healthcare.

For More Information:

- [See](#) our resources on HIPAA.
- [Learn](#) more about immunization registries.
- Explore state and federal laws related to patient [privacy and confidentiality](#) and [public health data collection and reporting](#).

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¹ Martin DW, Lowery NE, Brand B, Gold R, Horlick G. Immunization information systems: a decade of progress in law and policy. J Public Health Manag Pract. 2015 May-Jun;21(3):296-303.