Purpose: The purpose of this study is to determine state education requirements for parents requesting an exemption from immunizations required for school entry. A secondary purpose of this study is to identify barriers to delivering education. This is a follow-up study about immunization education.

Research questions:

- What type of education is given to parents requesting an exemption
- Is exemption education standardized?
- What are the barriers to delivering the exemption education?

Methods: This descriptive study was conducted by telephone interview. Thirteen state immunization managers replied that their state required education prior to receiving an exemption, thus they were identified as participants. Two immunization managers were excluded because on follow-up they reported they do not actually require education before obtaining an exemption. Two state immunization managers were excluded after several failed attempts to make contact via phone and email. IRB approval was received prior to data collection. Data from the phone interviews were analyzed using the steps of descriptive content analysis. Members of the research team reviewed and compared codes. The researchers came to a consensus on all codes that did not have overlap. The codes were grouped into categories and themes and then analyzed for generalizations and conclusions.

Results: Nine state immunization managers met inclusion criteria. Education delivery methods were identified as interactive, non-interactive, and non-educational. Three states use interactive education via face-to-face conversations with a healthcare professional. Interestingly, only one state delivers interactive education through an online module with quizzes. One state uses two forms of education both non-interactive (watching a video) and interactive (taking a quiz after viewing the video). Three states use non-interactive education through informational handouts. Two states employ a non-educational method by solely obtaining a signature on a form. Seven of the nine states reported that the education is standardized across the state. Immunization managers identified three barriers to provided exemption education, 1) acceptance of the education by the parent, 2) refusal to participate from the healthcare provider, and; 3) expense to implement the education.

Clinical Implications: State immunization manager’s definition of required education varies. While most states reported standardized education, further research is warranted to understand what type of education is most effective to increase immunization rates. Additionally, the findings from this study may help legislatures in developing policies regarding immunization exemptions. While one of the barriers is healthcare provider refusal. NP’s can actively participate in encouraging clinics to schedule sufficient time to adequately educate parents and answer immunization related questions.

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Conclusions:
• NPs should encourage longer appointment times for adequate education regarding immunization exemptions.
• Assist lawmakers in future immunization policy decision making.

Further research:
• Identify the most effective form of education.
• Explore provider refusal to provide an exemption.

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References:

Introduction:
• Mandatory vaccination laws began in Massachusetts in 1905.
• By the early 1980's all 50 states enforced similar vaccine laws.
• All states allow citizens to legally exempt their children from vaccines for medical, temporary medical and/or personal reasons.
• Vaccine exemption laws vary by state, some require education prior to obtaining an exemption.

Purpose:
• To determine state education requirements for parents requesting an exemption from immunizations required for school entry.
• To identify barriers to delivering education.

Research Questions:
• What type of education is given to parents requesting an exemption.
• Is exemption education standardized?
• What are the barriers to delivering the exemption education?

Methods:
• Descriptive study.
• Telephone interviews.

Participants included nine state immunization managers where exemption education is required.

Results:
• 13 state immunization managers identified based on exemption education requirement.
  • 2 states did not meet inclusion criteria.
  • 2 states unable to be contacted.
• Three forms of education were identified:
  • Interactive: face-to-face with healthcare provider, online module with quizzes, and quiz after viewing a video.
  • Not Interactive: handouts and video.
  • Non-educational: forms requiring signature.
• 7 states confirm exemption education is standardized.
• 2 states do not have standardized education.

Standardized Education Requirements for Immunization Exemptions Across the Nation
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Exemption Education by Type

22%
45%
33%

Barriers to Exemption Education

Interactive
Not Interactive
Non-educational

0 5 10 15 20 25 30 35 40
Heads-up
Refusal to Participate
Time
Cost