



Measles in Texas: What Private Schools Can Do During the Ongoing Outbreak

Insights

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The recent and ongoing measles outbreak in Texas has raised significant concerns among educators, parents, and health officials. As the number of cases continues to rise and spread around the state, including the recent announcement of a first confirmed case in Harris County, private schools must take steps to ensure the safety and well-being of their students and staff. This article provides an overview of the outbreak and offers practical tips for private schools to effectively respond to this public health challenge.

Overview of the Measles Outbreak

Measles, a highly contagious viral disease, has seen a resurgence in Texas, with numerous cases reported across various counties.

- 624 cases have been confirmed in Texas as of April 22.
- The outbreak has been tied to low vaccination rates and increased exposure in public spaces.
- Symptoms of measles include high fever, cough, runny nose, and a characteristic red rash.
- Complications can be severe, particularly for young children and those with weakened immune systems. To date, two deaths of school-age children have been attributed to the measles outbreak.

Practical Tips for Private Schools

Here are some practical tips you can put into effect right away to help minimize risks for your school community.

1. Review Documentation

- The MMR vaccine is required for students to attend school in Texas. However, conscientious objections and medical exemptions make it possible for private schools to have students who are not vaccinated against the measles.
- Review your paperwork to determine whether you have any unvaccinated students.

2. Enhance Communication

- Keep parents and staff informed about the outbreak and the measures your school is taking.
- Use newsletters, emails, and meetings to provide updates and address concerns.

3. Alert Your Nurse or Clinic Staff

- Ensure your school nurse or clinic staff are aware of the outbreak and familiar with the symptoms of measles to identify possible cases early.
- Establish protocols for isolating and managing suspected cases promptly.

4. Understand your Legal Obligations

- Schools must exclude children who have or are suspected to have measles for four days after rash onset, or in the case of an outbreak, exclude unvaccinated children for at least 21 days after the child was exposed to measles.
- Schools are required to file a report with the Department of State Health Services if there is a student at the school who is suspected of having measles.

5. Strengthen Hygiene Practices

- Ensure that handwashing facilities are readily available and stocked with soap and sanitizers.
- Encourage frequent handwashing and the use of tissues or elbows to cover coughs and sneezes.

6. Review and Update Policies

Revisit school policies on illness and absenteeism to be certain your policy is clear about your position on:

- conscientious objections
- the process for medical exemptions; and
- your school's right to exclude unvaccinated students from school in the case of an outbreak.

Conclusion

Please consult your Fisher Phillips attorney, the authors of this Insight, or any attorney on [our Education Team](#) or in [our Texas offices](#) to obtain practical advice and guidance on how to navigate the ongoing measles outbreak. Please also make sure you are subscribed to [Fisher Phillips' Insight System](#) to get the most up-to-date information.

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