

Massachusetts issues its own vaccine schedule for kids, countering federal recommendations

By [Jason Laughlin](#) Globe Staff, Updated January 15, 2026, 10:14 a.m.



In 2022, Jillian Sumagit, 9, received her COVID-19 booster shot. On Wednesday, Massachusetts unveiled its recommended guidance on childhood vaccinations, countering the recent federal government schedule. JOHN TLUMACKI/GLOBE STAFF

Governor Maura Healey released new guidance on childhood vaccinations Wednesday, countering Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s recent overhaul of the schedule.

[On Jan. 5](#), the Trump administration reduced the number of vaccinations it recommends for all children, framing the decision as a way to increase public trust by backing only the most important shots.

Unlike the federal government, Massachusetts continues to recommend that every child receive inoculations for hepatitis B, rotavirus, flu, COVID, and RSV, following guidance from the [American Academy of Pediatrics](#). Under Kennedy, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention now recommends these shots only for children at high risk or when doctors encourage them in what's called "shared decision-making," in which doctors and patients [collaborate on treatment decisions](#).

Insurance will continue to cover all vaccinations for children.

The federal rollback caused outrage among doctors and health authorities, mainly because it came amid a particularly [deadly flu season](#). The flu has killed 66 people in Massachusetts so far this season, including [four children](#), double the number of deaths reported at this time last year.

The federal changes came without any new evidence casting doubt on the decades of data showing vaccines for children are safe and effective.

"The decision to change CDC's childhood immunization schedule is reckless and deeply dangerous," said Dr. Robbie Goldstein, the state public health commissioner, in a statement Wednesday. "It replaces decades of transparent, evidence-based guidance with uncertainty."

The state's announcement is the latest development in the growing rift between state and federal health officials during Kennedy's tenure as secretary of health. Under his leadership, federal health agencies, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, have pivoted their policies and recommendations away from established science to align with Kennedy's antivaccine ideology. The health secretary packed a

vaccine advisory committee with people who share his ideology and fired the former head of the CDC because, she has said, [she wouldn't rubber-stamp his directives.](#)

Recommended vaccines, ages birth to 18

See which vaccines are recommended by the state vs. the federal government.

Vaccine and other immunizing agents	State: Universal	Fed: Universal	Fed: High risk/patient-doctor judgement
Hepatitis B	Yes	No	Yes
Rotavirus	Yes	No	Yes
Diphtheria, tetanus, and acellular pertussis (DTaP <7 yrs)	Yes	Yes	No
Haemophilus influenzae type b (Hib)	Yes	Yes	No
Pneumococcal conjugate	Yes	Yes	No
Inactivated poliovirus	Yes	Yes	No
COVID-19	Yes	No	Yes
Influenza	Yes	No	Yes
Measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR)	Yes	Yes	No
Varicella (Chicken Pox)	Yes	Yes	No

In 2025, Kennedy and the agencies he led banned a preservative from vaccines despite evidence it did not cause harm, repeatedly suggested a link between vaccines and autism, a claim that has been debunked, and changed recommendations for infant hepatitis B vaccinations that health experts said would increase the risk of infections.

Public health leaders in several northeast states, including Massachusetts, felt they needed to intervene and announced they would begin ignoring federal recommendations

and issuing their own vaccination guidelines.

Goldstein was a leader in forming the Northeast Public Health Collaborative, which also includes [Connecticut](#), [New Jersey](#), [New York State](#), [Vermont](#), [Pennsylvania](#), [Rhode Island](#), along with New York City. Over the past week, those states, along with 11 others, including New Hampshire, stated their childhood vaccine schedules would adhere to AAP recommendations, according to the [Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy](#).

“In Massachusetts, we will continue to lead with integrity, transparency, and an unshakeable commitment to protecting children’s health and well-being,” Goldstein said.

California, Washington, Oregon, and Hawaii have also formed a public health alliance to counter new federal recommendations and are also following AAP guidelines, according to CIDRAP.

Public health experts and physicians have expressed concern that competing vaccine recommendations will confuse families, even in well-vaccinated states such as Massachusetts. It is necessary, though, for Massachusetts to stand up for evidence-based science, they said.

“These are life-saving vaccines for illnesses that used to create far more mortality and morbidity, far more illness and death, than they do at this point in history,” said Carlene Pavlos, executive director of the Massachusetts Public Health Alliance.

It does help minimize confusion, she said, that northeast states are speaking with a unified voice.

“It makes it clear that there is a consensus amongst those who are experts in both infectious disease and pediatric medicine,” Pavlos said.

Her organization has joined a group of national health organizations [seeking to vacate](#) Kennedy’s revamped childhood vaccine schedule. The petition also seeks to prevent the

CDC's vaccine advisory committee from holding its February meeting. A hearing is scheduled for Feb. 13.

“Children’s health depends on vaccine recommendations based on rigorous, transparent science,” said Dr. Andrew D. Racine, president of the American Academy of Pediatrics, in a statement. “Unfortunately, recent decisions by federal officials have abandoned this standard, causing unnecessary confusion for families, compromising access to lifesaving vaccines, and weakening community protection.”

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