

Massachusetts Department
of Public Health



Protecting Public Health in Massachusetts During Federal Vaccine Policy Challenges

April 15, 2026

Angela Fowler, MD, MPH

Associate Medical Director for Vaccine Preventable Diseases

Bureau of Infectious Disease and Laboratory Sciences

Massachusetts Department of Public Health

Federal Vaccine Policy has been Challenging

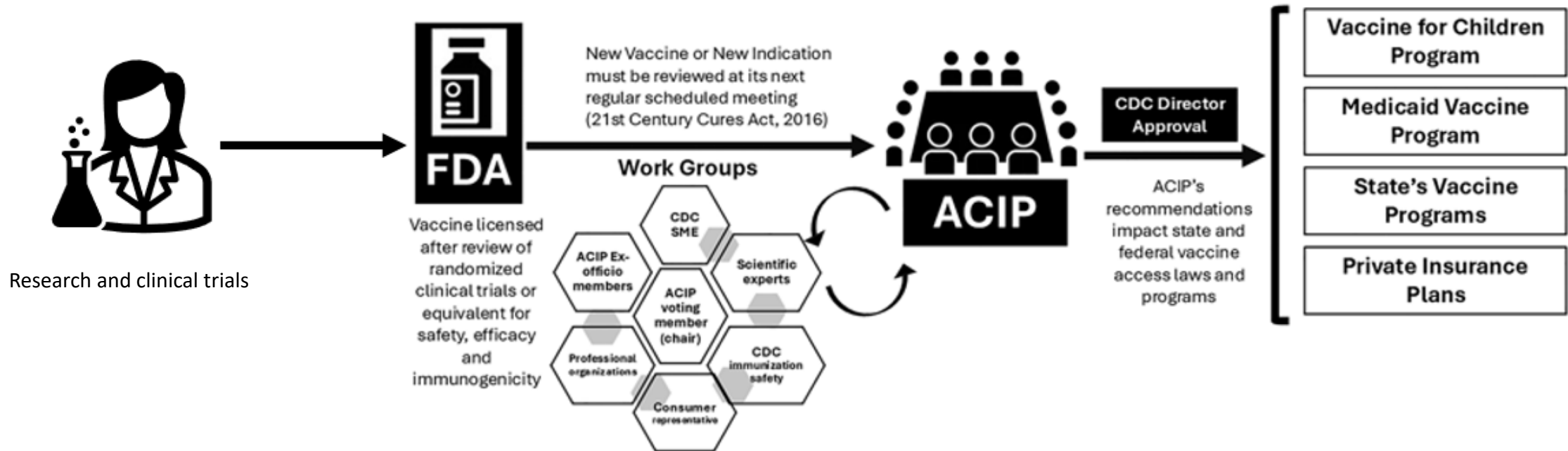
Federal Vaccine Policy Has been Chaotic!



Massachusetts is Committed to Evidence-Based Vaccine Policy

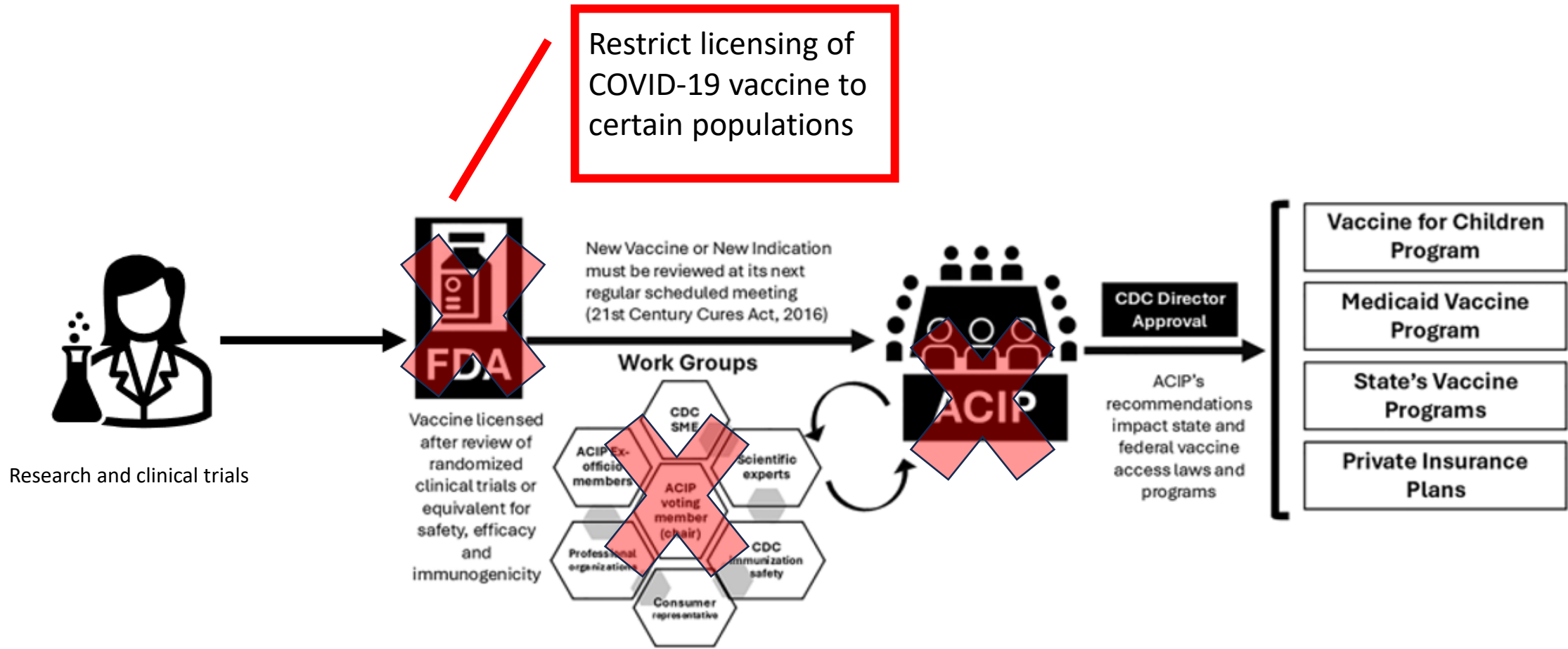
A screenshot of a news article from GBH. The top navigation bar is purple with the GBH logo and the tagline "What matters to you." Below the navigation bar, there are links for "TV", "RADIO & PODCASTS", "NEWS", and "MUSIC & CULTURE". A "SHARE" button with social media icons is visible. The main image shows Governor Maura Healey at a podium with a sign that reads "Protecting Public Health". She is surrounded by other officials and flags. The caption below the image reads: "Gov. Maura Healey announces a series of vaccine access measures during a press conference on Thursday, Sept. 4, 2025. Katie Lannan / GBH News".

Traditional Vaccine Recommendation Process



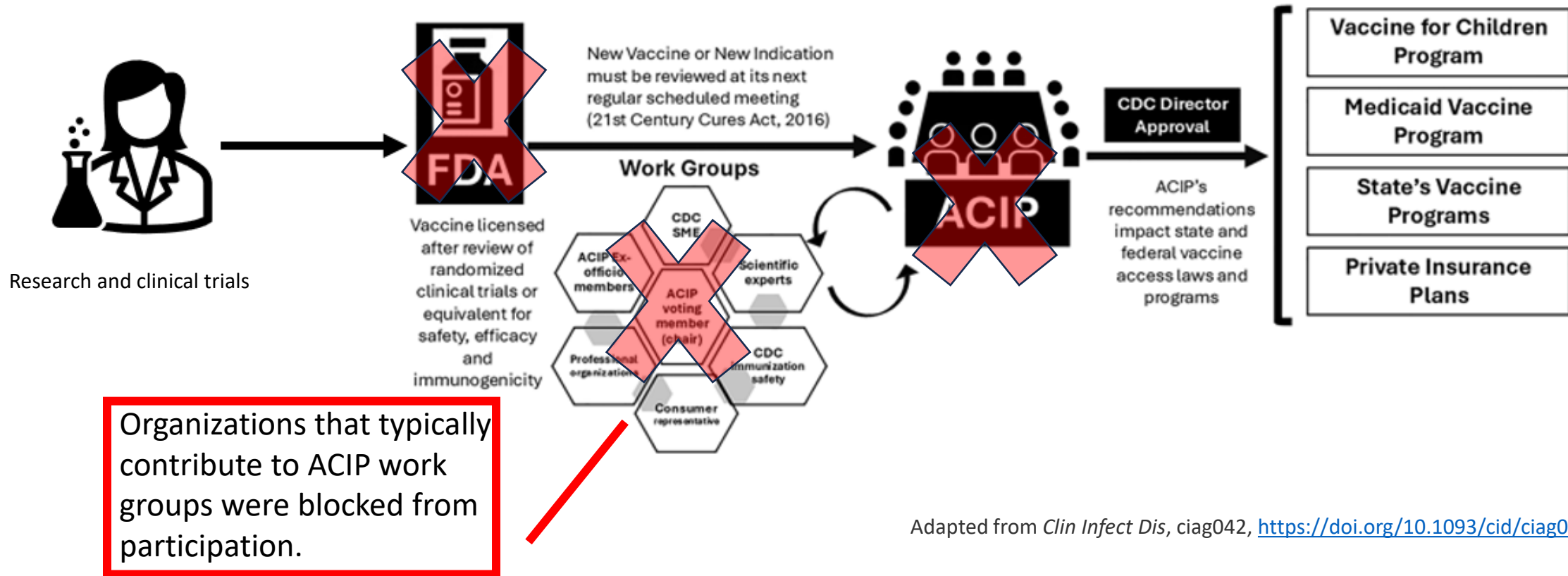
Adapted from *Clin Infect Dis*, ciag042, <https://doi.org/10.1093/cid/ciag042>

Disruptions to the Traditional Vaccine Recommendation Process



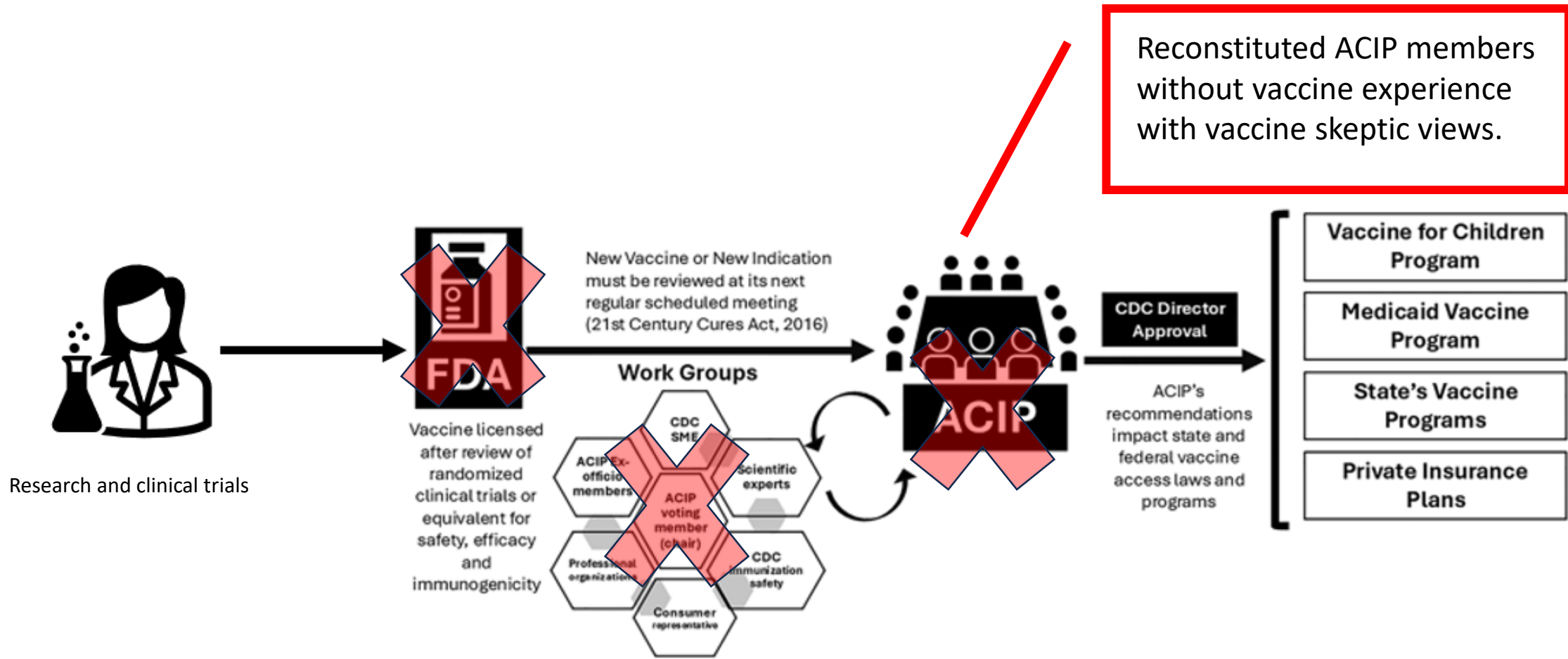
Adapted from *Clin Infect Dis*, ciag042, <https://doi.org/10.1093/cid/ciag042>

Disruptions to the Traditional Vaccine Recommendation Process



Adapted from *Clin Infect Dis*, ciag042, <https://doi.org/10.1093/cid/ciag042>

Disruptions to the Traditional Vaccine Recommendation Process



Adapted from *Clin Infect Dis*, ciag042, <https://doi.org/10.1093/cid/ciag042>

Timeline of Recent Federal Vaccine Actions

- June 2025 - RFK dismissed all members of the ACIP. The ACIP was reconstituted with members that were not knowledgeable about vaccines and/or had expressed vaccine skepticism.
- August 2025 - FDA approved updated fall 2025 COVID-19 vaccines but limited licensing to adults 65 and older and younger people with at least one high-risk condition.
- September 2025 - ACIP/CDC recommended individual-based decision-making for COVID-19 vaccination for child and adults.
- December 2025 - ACIP/CDC recommended individual-based decision-making for hepatitis B vaccination at birth for infants born to women who tested negative for hepatitis B virus.
- January 2026 - HHS/CDC revised the federal childhood immunization schedule - removed several vaccines from the routinely recommended list

What are the Concerns About the Federal Changes to Childhood Vaccine Recommendations?

- **Improper process** to enact these changes
- **No new science** to support changing the recommendations
- **Pushback** from clinicians, public health organizations and major medical groups

“Science only complicates rhetoric.”
- Kevin Hall

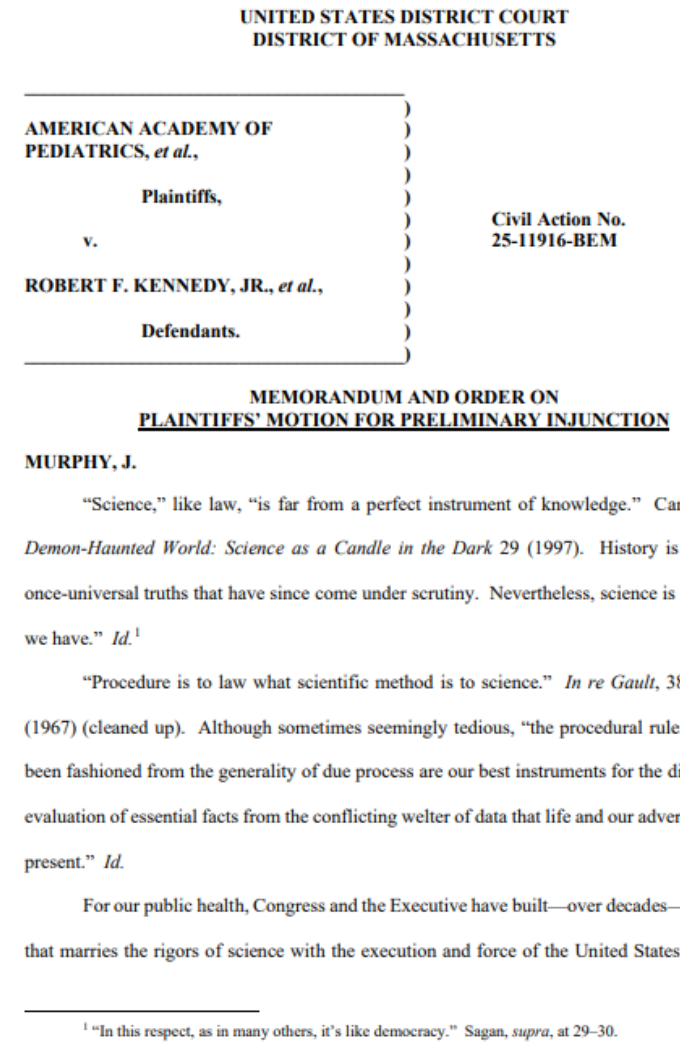


Legal Action pursued against the federal government

American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) along with others **sued RFK and HHS** in federal court about the federal vaccine actions.

Recently, a federal judge in Boston **stayed many of the federal actions:**

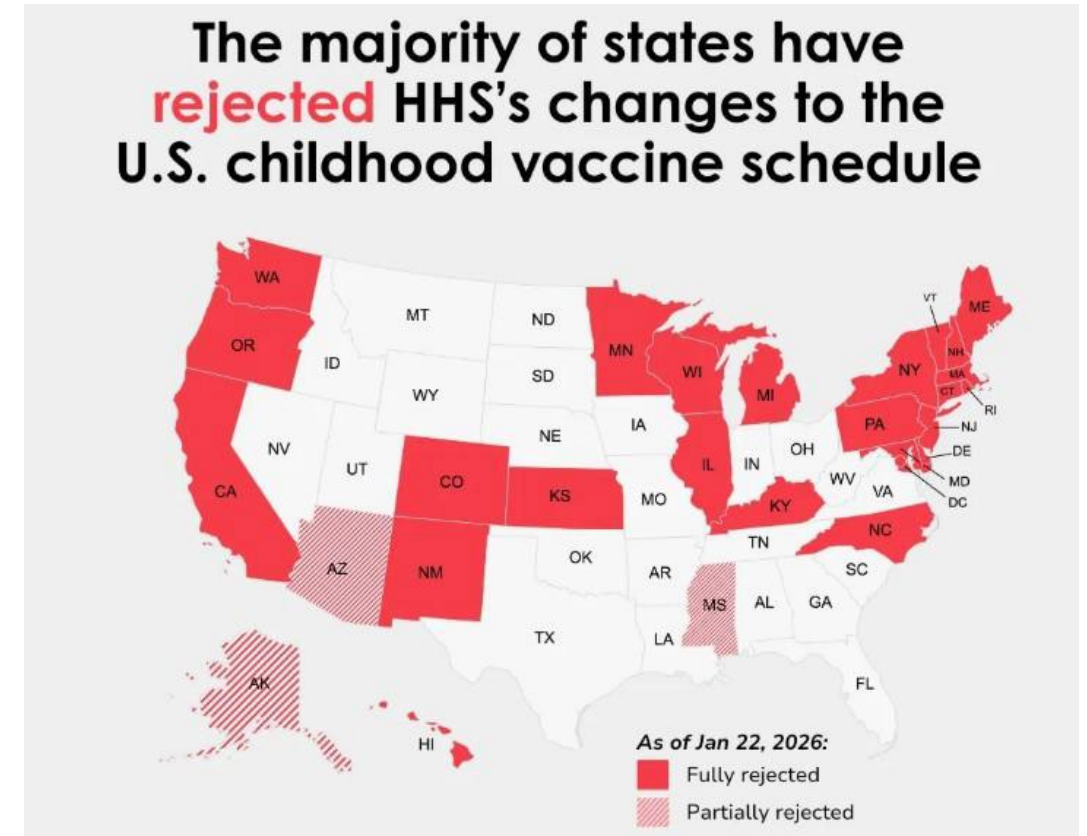
1. The January 2026 Memo – which had reduced routine childhood vaccine recommendations was stayed.
2. The reconstituted ACIP membership – the 13 members Secretary Kennedy appointed are now stayed from service, effectively freezing the committee.
3. All votes taken by the reconstituted ACIP – the June, September, and December 2025 votes (on flu/thimerosal, COVID, and hepatitis B) are stayed.



Massachusetts Response

Recent CDC Changes to Childhood Vaccine Recommendations

- **No new science** to support changing the recommendations
- “Arbitrary and capricious”
- Pushback from clinicians, public health organizations and major medical groups
- States, health departments, and professional organizations have taken action to counter federal vaccine policy actions.
- Federal government is no longer a reliable source for evidence-base guidance for immunization



DPH Takes Steps to Ensure COVID-19 Vaccine Access

Last fall, there was concern that ACIP/CDC would not recommend COVID-19 vaccines

Governor Healey and DPH Commissioner Goldstein took several actions announced in September 2025:

- **Insurance coverage for vaccines** - Division of Insurance (DOI) and Department of Public Health (DPH) issued a bulletin that requires insurance carriers in Massachusetts to continue to cover vaccines recommended by DPH.
- **Standing orders to permit pharmacists to administer COVID-19 vaccines** - Commissioner Goldstein issued a standing order to allow pharmacies to continue to provide COVID-19 vaccines to Massachusetts residents aged five and older.
- **DPH Commissioner decides which vaccines can be given in pharmacies** - DPH updated its vaccine administration policy to permit the DPH Commissioner to determine which routine vaccines can be administered by pharmacists in Massachusetts, instead of limiting them only to vaccines recommended by ACIP/CDC.



Responding to RFK's ACIP Vaccine Votes

Issued Guidance for Clinicians in Massachusetts for:

Pediatric Hepatitis B vaccine



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Department of Public Health
Bureau of Infectious Disease and Laboratory Sciences
305 South Street, Jamaica Plain, MA 02130

Maura T. Healey
Governor
Kimberley Driscoll
Lieutenant Governor

Kiame Mahaniah, MD, MBA
Secretary
Robert Goldstein, MD, PhD
Commissioner

Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) Guidance on Use of the Hepatitis B Vaccine for Infants and Children December 2025

This document provides guidance from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) regarding infant vaccination against hepatitis B, following the recent recommendations issued by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) on December 4-5, 2025.

DPH continues to **strongly** recommend that:

- All newborns receive a birth dose of hepatitis B vaccine within 24 hours of delivery, regardless of the hepatitis B infection status of the birth parent.
- Newborns born to birth parents who test positive for hepatitis B infection or have an unknown status be vaccinated within 12 hours of birth. Infants whose birth parent has hepatitis B infection should also receive hepatitis B immune globulin (HBIG).
- All children complete the full hepatitis B vaccination series within 18 months (doses administered at 0, 1-2 and 6-18 months of age).

Pediatric MMRV vaccine

Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) Guidance on Use of the Measles, Mumps, Rubella, Varicella (MMRV) Vaccine in Children Under the Age of Four Years

October 2025

This document provides guidance from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) regarding vaccination against measles, mumps, rubella, and varicella, following the recent recommendations issued by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) on September 18-19, 2025. This guidance was developed through review of available data, consultation with professional societies (including the American Academy of Pediatrics), review of the ACIP materials and recommendations, and collaboration with regional public health agencies ([see Northeast Public Health Collaborative statement](#)).

There are two options to protect children against measles, mumps, rubella, and varicella:

- Trivalent MMR vaccine and varicella vaccine administered separately
- Quadrivalent MMRV vaccine

The two options are considered equivalent in terms of protection against disease.

DPH recommends the following for routine childhood vaccination against measles, mumps, rubella, and varicella:

- 2-dose series at age 12-15 months; and at age 4-6 years
- MMR vaccine or MMRV vaccine may be administered

Note: for dose 1 in children age 12-47 months, it is preferable to administer MMR and varicella vaccines separately. Quadrivalent MMRV vaccine may be used if parents or caregivers express a preference for the MMRV vaccine to reduce the number of injections.

COVID-19 vaccine

Massachusetts 2025-2026 Respiratory Illness Season

COVID-19 Vaccine Recommendations

COVID-19 is an easily transmitted and potentially dangerous respiratory disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. COVID-19 vaccines are critical tools to reduce public health burden of COVID-19 disease. COVID-19 vaccines have been shown to be safe and provide effective protection against serious outcomes, including hospitalization and death. Populations at higher risk for severe COVID-19 outcomes benefit most from vaccination.

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) is committed to providing resourced, evidence-based recommendations to guide the use of vaccines to protect our communities. DPH conferred with scientists and physicians across the northeast region to collaboratively develop recommendations for the use of the 2025-2026 COVID-19 vaccines.

The DPH 2025-2026 COVID-19 vaccine recommendations align with those of the [Northeast Public Health Collaborative Recommendations for the 2025-2026 COVID-19 Vaccine](#) and leading physician professional organizations, including the [American Academy of Pediatrics \(AAP\)](#), the [American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists \(ACOG\)](#), and the [American Academy of Family Physicians \(AAFP\)](#). The table below summarizes the DPH COVID-19 vaccine recommendations for the 2025-2026 respiratory season.

Children and adolescents

- **All children 6-23 months of age should receive** age appropriate 2025-2026 COVID-19 vaccination.

https://www.mass.gov/info-details/dph-recommended-guidance-for-vaccines?_ga=2.132252366.1189095618.1773066220-2034031560.1772812261&_gl=1*hsum27*_ga*MjAzNDZMTU2MC4xNzcyODEyMjYx*_ga_MCLPEGW7WM*czE3NzM5NDUyNjYkbzEkZzEkdDE3NzM5NDUyNjYkajYwJGwwJGgw#COVID-19-vaccine-guidance

Responding to HHS Pediatric Immunization Schedule Overhaul



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Department of Public Health
250 Washington Street, Boston, MA 02108-4619
617-624-6000 | mass.gov/dph

Maura T. Healey
Governor

Kimberley Driscoll
Lieutenant Governor

Kiame Mahaniah, MD, MBA
Secretary

Robert Goldstein, MD, PhD
Commissioner

**Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH)
Guidance on Recommended Reference Materials for Pediatric Immunization
Schedules
January 2026**

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) is issuing this notification to inform clinicians of a change in recommended reference materials for pediatric immunization schedules.

DPH has a longstanding and ongoing commitment to promoting evidence-based immunization practices that protect communities from vaccine preventable illnesses. Following a review of recent changes to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) pediatric immunization schedule, DPH now recommends that clinicians in Massachusetts use the **American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) Recommended Child and Adolescent Immunization Schedule** as the primary reference for the routine immunization of infants, children, and adolescents.

DPH advisory released in January 2026 advising physicians and families to follow the American Academy of Pediatrics Recommended Child and Adolescent Immunization Schedule following changes announced by the CDC.

<https://www.mass.gov/doc/dph-guidance-on-recommended-reference-materials-for-pediatric-immunization/download>

Massachusetts School Vaccine Requirements

2026-2027 Massachusetts School Immunization Requirements

Massachusetts school immunization requirements are created under the authority of [105 CMR 220.000: Immunization of Students Before Admission to School](#).

Requirements apply to all students, including individuals from other countries attending or visiting classes or educational programs as part of an academic visitation or exchange program. Requirements apply to all students in every grade, even if they are over 18 years of age.

Childcare/Preschool^{§51†}

Attendees <2 years should be immunized for their age according to [2026 AAP Recommended Child and Adolescent Immunization Schedule](#). Requirements listed in the table below apply to all attendees ≥2 years. These requirements also apply to children in preschool classes called K0 or K1.

Hib	1-4 doses; number of doses is determined by vaccine product and age the series begins
DTaP	4 doses
Polio	3 doses
Hepatitis B	3 doses; laboratory evidence of immunity acceptable
MMR	1 dose; must be given on or after the 1 st birthday; laboratory evidence of immunity acceptable
Varicella	1 dose; must be given on or after the 1 st birthday; a reliable history of chickenpox* or laboratory evidence of immunity acceptable

Northeast Public Health Collaborative



The screenshot shows a web page from Mass.gov. At the top left is the Mass.gov logo. To its right is a search bar with the text "Search Mass.gov" and a "SEARCH Q" button. Below the search bar is a breadcrumb trail: "Executive Office of Health and Human Services > Department of Public Health". Underneath is a section "OFFERED BY Department of Public Health". The main heading is "PRESS RELEASE" followed by the title "Several Northeastern states and America's largest city announce the Northeast Public Health Collaborative". Below the title is a sub-headline: "Voluntary coalition includes Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York State, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island and New York City". To the right of the main text is a "MEDIA CONTACT" section listing "Omar Cabrera, Manager of Ethnic Media and Community Outreach" with a "Phone" icon and the number "(617) 624-5006". On the left side of the page, there is a box for "FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:" with the date "9/18/2025" and "Department of Public Health". At the bottom left, the word "BOSTON" is followed by the start of the press release text.

Massachusetts led the effort to create the Northeast Public Health Collaborative, a consortium of state and city health departments across the Northeast committed to safeguarding public health. As part of the Collaborative, DPH has collaborated on multiple statements related to pediatric vaccines:

- Endorsing evidence-based recommendations
- Pointing clinicians to evidence based clinical guidance resources
- Refuting claims that pediatric vaccines cause autism

DPH Activities to Support Vaccination

- Developed contingency plans in case pediatric vaccines are no longer available through CDC/VFC
- Monitor pediatric vaccination rates - yearly school vaccination surveys
- Monitor respiratory illness vaccination - MA Respiratory Immunization Dashboard
- In collaboration with partner organizations:
 - Clinician education and outreach
 - Community education and outreach
 - Support mobile, school and community vaccination events



<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/school-immunizations>

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/immunizations-for-respiratory-diseases>

Thank you! Connect with DPH



X: [@MassDPH](https://twitter.com/MassDPH)



LinkedIn:
[Massachusetts Department of Public Health](https://www.linkedin.com/company/massachusetts-department-of-public-health)



mass.gov/DPH