

ROY LEE

First District

LAURA CAPPS

Second District, Chair

JOAN HARTMANN

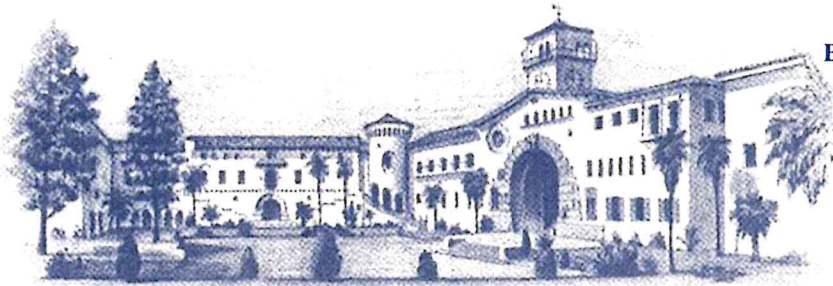
Third District

BOB NELSON

Fourth District, Vice-Chair

STEVE LAVAGNINO

Fifth District



COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

County Administration Building

105 East Anapamu Street

Santa Barbara, CA 93101

Telephone: (805) 568-2190

www.countyofsb.org

August 19, 2025

Honorable Patricia Kelly
Presiding Judge
Santa Barbara County Superior Court
County Courthouse
1100 Anacapa Street
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

Reference: Response to Santa Barbara Civil Grand Jury report entitled, "Do Vaccination Rates in Santa Barbara County Create a Public Health Risk?"

Judge Kelly:

Please find attached the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors (Board) response to the above referenced Civil Grand Jury Report. As directed by the Grand Jury, all responses are provided in accordance with Section 933.05 of the California Penal Code (PC). Pursuant to PC Section 933 (c) and (d), responses are provided on behalf of the Board of Supervisors.

Sincerely,

Laura Capps, Chair
Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors

cc: Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors

**Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors
Response to the Santa Barbara County Grand Jury 2024-25 Report
“Do Vaccination Rates in Santa Barbara County Create a Public Health Risk?”**

The County of Santa Barbara acknowledges and appreciates the thorough analysis, findings, and recommendations of the Grand Jury in this report. As the responses below indicate, the County remains committed to protecting the community from infectious disease threats and preparing for future outbreaks. The County acknowledges the shortfalls of current databases that do not accurately account for vaccinations of homeschooled children or vaccinations in adults. The Santa Barbara County Health Department (County Health) reports that robust data will be available in the future as new mandates in the State of California require all vaccinations to be entered into the California Immunization Registry (CAIR). County Health continues to use proxy measures such as trends, disease outbreaks and other tools to assess community immunity and any associated risks.

Finding 1

The lack of County-wide childhood vaccination data for homeschooled children means that County Health knowledge of community immunity levels is incomplete.

The Board of Supervisors agrees. Unlike children enrolled in school, homeschooled children are not mandated to report vaccine status and therefore vaccination rates in this population of children are unknown. This is consistent across California.

Recommendation 1

The Grand Jury recommends that the County Board of Supervisors require County Health to study and estimate childhood vaccination levels of homeschooled children in the County. To be implemented by December 1, 2025.

This recommendation will not be implemented. There is no feasible method to reliably study and estimate childhood vaccination levels of homeschooled children. In an effort to address the Grand Jury’s recommendation, County Health reviewed the estimated number of homeschooled children and assumed they were all unvaccinated in order to represent a “worst case scenario.” In such scenario, the overall vaccination rates for children between the ages of 5 to 17 dropped from 97% to 93%.¹ Herd immunity targets range between 90 to 95%, thus even under this scenario, the County is still within the herd immunity target.

¹ To obtain these figures, County Health utilized the Department of Finance age population estimate for ages 5 to 17 in Santa Barbara County (75,643) and subtracted the private and public school estimates for this population using the Department of Education population counts (5,493 and 66,864, respectively) resulting in 3,286 homeschooled children. See <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/si/ps/psastatcountsbycnty.asp>; <https://www.ed-data.org/county/santa-barbara>; <https://dof.ca.gov/forecasting/demographics/projections>. According to the California Department of Public Health, 97% of school aged children in public and private schools are vaccinated. Assuming for this exercise that zero homeschooled children are vaccinated, the vaccination rate for this population fell to 93%.

Finding 2

The lack of County-wide childhood vaccination data for adults means that County Health knowledge of community immunity levels is incomplete.

The Board of Supervisors disagrees partially with an explanation. The Board agrees that currently there is no reliable database for countywide childhood vaccination data for adults. However, this does not mean that the knowledge of community immunity levels is incomplete. The California Immunization Registry (CAIR) began mandating data entry of all vaccines since January 2023, therefore as residents age into adulthood, childhood vaccine rates within adults will become available. Currently, County Health relies on data from reportable vaccine preventable diseases and outbreak trends to assess whether the community immunity is at risk.

Recommendation 2

The Grand Jury recommends that the County Board of Supervisors require County Health to study and estimate childhood vaccination levels of adults in the County. To be implemented by December 1, 2025.

This recommendation will not be implemented. There is no reliable method to estimate childhood vaccination levels in adults. The only feasible method would be through a countywide survey where individuals are asked to provide or recollect their childhood immunization records. However, recollection is unreliable and insufficient to infer community immunity and it is unlikely that adults maintain their child immunization records.

Finding 3

The Sheriff's Office has not determined childhood vaccination rates of inmates in County jails, potentially placing the inmates and staff at risk.

The Board of Supervisors disagrees partially with an explanation. The Board agrees that the Sheriff's Office has not determined childhood vaccination rates of inmates in County Jails but disagrees that this places the inmates and staff at risk. Inmates are screened for communicable disease signs and symptoms upon intake, and County Disease Control staff provide assistance and recommendations to jail healthcare staff for disease surveillance and reporting.

Recommendation 3

The Grand Jury recommends that the Sheriff's Office collect data during health intake screenings at the County's jails to determine childhood vaccination rates. To be implemented by December 1, 2025.

This recommendation will be implemented. The Board agrees with this recommendation and County Health recommends that the intake process and initial health assessment at the County Jails include questions about childhood vaccination rates or indicators of being vaccinated, such as attending elementary school in California or serving in the military (both mandates for childhood vaccination). According to the Sheriff Office's response to the Grand Jury dated July 29, 2025, this recommendation will be implemented by December 1, 2025.

Finding 4

There is no program in place at the County's jails to provide childhood vaccinations to unvaccinated inmates, increasing risk for the inmates and staff.

The Board of Supervisors disagrees partially with an explanation. The Board agrees that there is no program to provide childhood vaccinations to inmates but disagrees that this places the inmates and staff at risk. As indicated in the response to finding 3, inmates are screened on intake for communicable diseases. While it is impossible to eliminate all risk of disease transmission in jails, especially from asymptomatic persons, the risk is substantially reduced through intake screening, active surveillance, prompt isolation of symptomatic persons, and quarantining for exposed patients as needed.

Recommendation 4

The Grand Jury recommends that the Sheriff's Office implement a program to administer required childhood vaccinations to unvaccinated inmates. To be implemented by December 1, 2025.

This recommendation will be implemented. The Board supports offering catch-up vaccinations to unvaccinated incarcerated persons in accordance with the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) and based on identified risk factors. County Health is presently working with the contracted jail medical provider to implement a vaccination program in the jails consistent with the above guidelines. The Sheriff Office's July 29, 2025 response to the Grand Jury indicated that the Sheriff will be analyzing implementation of a vaccination program and will provide a written report of its analysis by December 1, 2025. Their analysis will be utilized to further refine implementation.

Finding 5

There is no procedure in place at the County's jails on when or how to isolate unvaccinated inmates, increasing potential risk of a disease outbreak in the jails.

The Board of Supervisors disagrees partially with an explanation. The Board agrees that there is not a specific procedure in place for isolating unvaccinated inmates, but disagrees that this increases a potential risk for disease outbreaks. The Sheriff's Office has established protocols for isolating inmates who exhibit signs and symptoms of infectious disease.

Recommendation 5

The Grand Jury recommends that the Sheriff's Office develop and enforce a procedure on when and how to isolate unvaccinated inmates. To be implemented by December 1, 2025.

This recommendation will not be implemented. Isolating otherwise healthy individuals can negatively impact mental health and can increase the risk for suicide in incarcerated persons. The Sheriff's Office has established protocols for isolating inmates who exhibit signs and symptoms of infectious disease. Isolating incarcerated persons solely because they are unvaccinated would potentially violate these individuals' rights.