

The authorities of Kazakhstan have been concerned about the increasing number of unvaccinated children for many years. However, unlike previously failed initiatives, this time the ministry of health has developed a draft law specifying fines to parents who refuse to vaccinate their children.

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The minister of health of Kazakhstan, Yelzhan Birtanov, told journalists in April about possible amendments to the Code of People's Health, which would significantly change the life of anti-vaccinators. The document sets forth fines to parents and ban on pre-school admission to unvaccinated children.

"We've decided to offer a set of measures designed to improve health of mothers and children, particularly, to encourage people register [with healthcare facilities] on time. Also, we've offered to impose administrative liability on people for untimely registration, failure to undergo periodic health examination, for refusal of vaccination," Birtanov [said](#).

According to the ministry of health, the country faces the increase in the number of vaccination refusals. In July 2018, the country registered more than 14 thousand refusals, which is 18 per cent more than last year.

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Measures to be taken against those who refuse vaccines have been debated for many years. There have been threats not to admit unvaccinated children to kindergarten; however, there has been no legitimate reason for that.

Now officials of the ministry of health suggest drastic measures: to fine parents for every refusal to vaccinate at the rate of 10 monthly calculation indices (MCI), or 25 thousand 250 tenges (66.6 dollars), and also to ban unvaccinated children from kindergartens.

The draft law specifies medical contraindication to vaccination, which exempts parents from fines.

See also: ["I'll Never Agree on Vaccines." More Parents in Kazakhstan Refuse Vaccination](#)

"Those children who don't get scheduled vaccines against diseases, whose list is approved

by the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan, shall not be admitted to pre-schools in order to prevent infectious diseases among children if no medical contraindications are present,” according to the draft law.

Fines are not a solution

Aruzhan Sain has been running a charity foundation “Dom”, which helps sick children, since 2006. According to her, fines won’t give the expected result and another approach should be taken:



Аружан Саин. Photo: lenta.inform.kz

I am personally not against vaccination, my children were vaccinated out of schedule. The increase in the number of anti-vaccinators can be stopped only by quality vaccination programme that has no consequences or complications. Every paediatrician, every nurse in polyclinics should follow the rule that children should be absolutely health to get a vaccine. Only then people will trust them more and will be getting vaccines.

See also: [History of Vaccines: From Shamans To Halal Vaccines](#)



Asiya Akhtanova. Photo: RFE/RL

Asiya Akhtanova, who has been managing the Association of Parents of Children with Disabilities for more than 20 years, has the same opinion and she thinks this draft law contradicts the constitutional norms. Moreover, according to her, doctors inject vaccines no matter what in order to fit in the statistics:

“Our organisation has registered a certain number of children who became disabled as a result of vaccine complications. We don’t say vaccines lead to disorders. Our system of medical contraindications to vaccines is poorly working. Even premature children get vaccinated on the second day after birth. In some cases, such vaccines can lead to disability.”

Measles outbreak

Late last year big cities reported measles outbreak. The number of cases, the majority of which were children, increased in Astana, Almaty and Akmola oblast.

According to deputy head of Department of Public Health Care in Almaty, **Assel Kalykova**, in November-December 2018 measles were reported in 193 cases:

“Since January 1 this year, 183 cases suspected measles, including 146 confirmed cases, with 108 cases among children. It means that the majority of cases were children, including children under the age of one year.”

See also: [*A Vaccine of Discord, or Why Parents in Kyrgyzstan Refuse Vaccination*](#)

4,670 confirmed measles cases were registered in Kazakhstan since January 1, 2019, including 3,350 cases (71.2 per cent) of children under the age of 14 years, [according](#) to the public health care committee.

Due to the measles situation, the national authorities have amended the national immunisation calendar. In the past, children used to get measles vaccine at the age of 1 year; the age has been decreased to nine months since April 1.

“They get zero dose and then, 2 months later, their first vaccine and at the age of 6-7 years a booster dose. 441 children in the age of 9-10 months were vaccinated since the launch of the additional vaccination programme in the city,” Kalykova said.

An excuse for laziness



Galiya Tobatayeva. Photo: time.kz

Galiya Tobatayeva, the head of Podranki-Sharasyzdar Public Association of People with Disabilities and a member of the Council for Patients' Rights and Prevention of Corruption in Healthcare at the Almaty city akimat, has been protecting the rights of disabled people via dialogue with the authorities for almost 20 years. She studies every major change in the healthcare system and expresses her opinion.

According to Tobatayeva, fines and penalties for vaccination refusal are not the best solution; moreover, the ground for 10 MCI is unclear, and the explanatory note to the draft law doesn't explain this amount.

"On the one hand, if I were a parent and my vaccinated child attended a kindergarten, I would be against unvaccinated children there because they put my child at risk. On the other hand, a fine for parental refusal may cause social tensions. Where did they take this figure, 10 MCI? How did they measure it? Explanatory work should be carried out with parents instead of introducing such drastic measures as fines or banning such children from preschool."

World Health Organisation representative to Kazakhstan, Oleg Chestnov, also [emphasised](#) that fines were not a solution:

All vaccines should be given. In this regard, Kazakhstan is a very advanced country. I am for vaccination. It's the only way to avoid serious diseases. Maybe, we provide wrong explanations? But I am against punishment because it justifies laziness of those who must persuade the parents.

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