



GRANDPARENTS *For* VACCINES



A STORYTELLING MOVEMENT TO PROTECT EVERY CHILD'S TOMORROW!

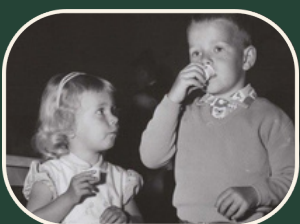
Grandparents for Vaccines is a storytelling movement that encourages America's 67 million grandparents to share their lived experiences about the pain of childhood diseases and the relief that vaccines brought to generations of families. Sharing your stories with family and friends turns your memories into messages – delivered with love.

Grandparents for Vaccines Is YOU! And We Need Your Help to Spread the Word!

*How do you grow a grassroots movement to protect childhood vaccinations?
You call on everyone who cares about this issue to do something!*

Below are some easy ways you can help:

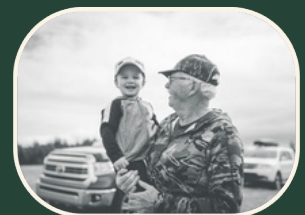
1. **Visit the [GFV webpage](#)** – Learn about our organization, find supportive resources, and join the thousands of others who want to be a voice for change. Once you've joined GFV, you'll be on the mailing list to get our bi-monthly GFV newsletter. Check our website often for updates! Share our website with friends and family, and encourage them to join, too!



SHARING OUR HISTORY



SHARING OUR LIVES



SHARING OUR STORIES

Subscribe To Our Newsletter



Easy ways you can help (continued from Page 1):

- **Be a keyboard warrior for childhood vaccination** – Do you use social media? With just a few clicks, you can:
 - Follow GFV on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [BlueSky](#), [YouTube](#), and [TikTok](#) – and invite your friends and family to do the same.
 - Visit our sites often, and *like, comment on,* and *share* GFV posts on your own social media accounts – and encourage your followers to do so, too! Likes, comments, and shares help social media algorithms push our posts out and spread the word about our movement. Be sure to rate our Facebook page, too! (Look for the star under “Details” near the top of our Facebook page.)
 - If you would like to contribute social media content, please message our social media director through the Grandparents for Vaccines Facebook Messenger, and include the suggested content in your message.
 - Social media experts say using hashtags can help extend the reach of posts, and adding 5-10 at the end of a post seems to garner the best results. If you like to use hashtags, here are some good ones to use when sharing GFV posts:

#GrandparentsForVaccines

#VaccinesWork

#HeardImmunity

#PublicHealth

#ChildHealth

#VaccinesSaveLives

#DontWaitVaccinate

#Vaccinate

#Immunization

- 2. Share your video story** – You’ll find lots of videos of people just like you sharing their emotional, often deeply moving, personal experiences on the [GFV YouTube channel](#). Add your story to our growing collection – stories have power! Visit the [“Share Your Story”](#) page on the GFV website for more information. If you don’t have a story to share, but you know someone who does, please encourage them to share it!
- 3. Write a Letter to the Editor** – Do you like to write? Consider sending a letter to the editor of your local newspaper in support of childhood vaccinations! These letters are short (usually no more than 300 words, often less) and focused on one topic. Impactful letters about childhood vaccinations should speak to your own experiences, writing from the perspective of a grandparent (or parent, or ally). Please mention that you are a member of Grandparents for Vaccines and mention our webpage: www.grandparentsforvaccines.org so that others can find us. It’s yet another way you can spread the word about GFV!
- 4. Comment on articles you read online** – Infectious disease outbreaks and vaccines have been in the news *a lot* lately. Often, digital newspapers, magazines, and other online media outlets offer their readers a chance to submit comments on articles. It’s another opportunity to speak as a grandparent, parent, or ally and share your stories, advocate for childhood vaccinations, and invite others to join/follow GFV! Be sure to include our website address so others can find us.
- 5. And finally, please consider becoming a GFV state leader** – Help make a difference for the children in YOUR state. Our organization is growing rapidly! While that’s a wonderful thing, we still have a few states without leaders, and all our state leaders could use a helping hand. You’ll be provided with training and support, and you’ll work with a diverse group of terrific people from many backgrounds who volunteer their time and talents to help America’s grandchildren stay healthy. Contact hello@grandparentsforvaccines.org and put “State Leader” in the subject line.



Image: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Public Domain

A Realistic Scenario: *This Is How a Child Dies of Measles*

The Atlantic recently published a powerful and harrowing piece titled "[This Is How a Child Dies of Measles.](#)" Though fictional, the author, Atlantic staff writer Elizabeth Bruenig, based her story "on extensive reporting and interactions with physicians, including those who have cared directly for patients with measles."

Bruenig's article is especially affecting because **most people in America - including doctors - have never seen a case of measles.**

Measles is the world's most contagious disease, and cases in the United States have seen a significant recent rise due to falling vaccination rates and subsequent loss of the 95% herd immunity necessary to protect communities from outbreaks.

According to [an article](#) published in the newsletter for the Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy (CIDRAP) at the University of Minnesota, as of March 6, 2026, the U.S. measles count had already reached 1,281 cases for the 2026 calendar year, a pace on track to surpass the total of 2,258 measles infections for all of 2025. **The total number of 2025 measles cases was the highest in 25 years**, according to a January 7, 2026, [article](#) in the American Academy of Pediatrics News.

Experts widely expect that the U.S. will soon lose the measles elimination status it has held since 2000 – an entire generation. A meeting to determine whether or not to revoke the U.S. status was originally scheduled for April 2026 with the Pan American Health Organization, an international panel of experts. At the request of U.S. government health officials, the meeting has been pushed back until November, according to a March 2, 2026, [article](#) in the *New York Times*.

Teddy Rosenbluth, the article's author, wrote: "Losing measles elimination status would mark a grim and embarrassing moment for the nation's public health: The United States achieved elimination status in 2000 after a nearly 40-year campaign to promote the vaccine, and has maintained that status every year since."





What Vaccines Do Children Need to Stay Healthy?

Curious about which vaccines the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends for children these days?

The AAP website www.healthychildren.org has a variety of resources about children’s health, including the 2026 [AAP Recommended Child and Adolescent Immunization Schedule](#).

America’s pediatricians care about children’s health and development so much that they made it their life’s work! They are **reliable and trusted messengers** for parents and caregivers, including grandparents, who want to learn more about the importance of childhood vaccinations.

From the AAP:

“The AAP schedule is considered the ideal timeline for healthy children as their immune system develops. Following the AAP schedule helps babies, children, and teens stay ahead of serious, preventable diseases such as measles and pertussis (whooping cough), as well as respiratory viruses such as respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), influenza and COVID.”

AAP Recommended Immunization Schedule — 2026

Children Birth Through 6 Years Old

	Birth	1 month	2 months	4 months	6 months	8 months	12 months	15 months	18 months	19-23 months	2-3 years	4-6 years
RSV	✓	1 dose during RSV season				✓ 1 dose during RSV season for those at high risk *						
HepB	✓	✓			✓							
RV			✓	✓	✓							
DTaP			✓	✓	✓			✓				✓
Hib			✓	✓	✓		✓					
PCV			✓	✓	✓		✓					
IPV			✓	✓	✓							✓
COVID-19					✓	Recommended for age group					✓ As recommended**	
Influenza					✓	Yearly						
MMR							✓					✓
Varicella							✓					✓
HepA							✓	Dose 2: 6 months after dose 1				

For more information, visit healthychildren.org/immunizationschedules.

*<https://www.healthychildren.org/rsv>
**<https://www.healthychildren.org/covid-19>



Follow link for the AAP 2026 Recommended Adolescent (ages 7-18) Immunization Schedule

Are Vaccinations Required for School?

Answer: It's complicated and getting even more so.

In the March 11, 2026 issue of the *Your Local Epidemiologist* Substack newsletter, epidemiologist Katelyn Jetelina, PhD, MPH and David Higgins, MD, MPH focused on the "Top 5 Questions About School Vaccination Requirements." Their entire article is timely and informative, but **the section about how to have productive conversations with friends, family, and neighbors on this topic is especially helpful for vaccine advocates.**

Drs. Jetelina and Higgins shared this advice:

How you talk about this matters just as much as what you say. The right approach also depends on who you're talking to.

Don't lead with science and data. When people feel like their values are being challenged, facts alone rarely change minds. Start with shared values, then let the evidence support the conversation. Begin with common ground. Most parents, regardless of their politics, want their kids to be safe at school and for school to run normally. Saying "I just want to make sure schools aren't shut down for weeks because of a preventable outbreak" is something almost everyone can agree with. Start there.

If someone brings up studies or claims that seem to contradict the evidence, resist the urge to debate every detail. Instead, acknowledge the concern and emphasize that what matters most is the totality of the evidence.

Words matter. Avoid the word "mandate." It tends to put people on the defensive immediately. Try "school immunization requirements" instead, and use "immunizations" rather than "vaccines" to sidestep some of the charged associations from COVID-19 debates. This framing also helps because school immunization requirements are just one part of standard enrollment paperwork, like getting a vision screening or a physical. Framing it that way makes it feel less like a political battle and more like a routine part of keeping kids healthy.

The article concludes:

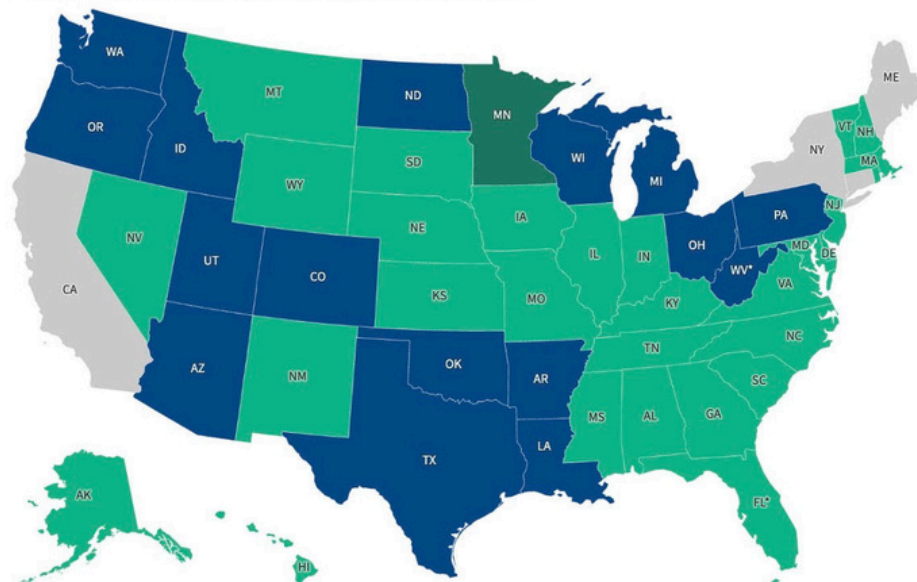
*School vaccine requirements do important, quiet work: they keep preventable outbreaks out of classrooms, keep kids in school, and create reliable moments for families to access health care they might not otherwise get. **Three out of four Americans support keeping these requirements. The challenge now is to make sure the majority is heard.***

States allowing school vaccination exemptions (right). Source: KFF, "A Look at Recent Changes to State Vaccine Requirements for School Children," Sept.12, 2025

47 States Allow Exemptions From School Vaccination Requirements for Religious and/or Personal Beliefs

Type of non-medical exemption(s) from school vaccination requirements permitted by state

■ No ■ Personal Belief ■ Religious ■ Religious and Personal Belief



Note: Count includes D.C. *Florida has announced that they plan to eliminate school vaccine requirements but have not enacted any legislation. West Virginia Governor Patrick Morrisey signed an executive order in January 2025 allowing religious and personal belief exemptions. The West Virginia Board of Education, however, still encourages families to act in accordance with the state's vaccination legislation, which only permits medical exemptions. Litigation is ongoing.



It's All for Community: Spotlight on Virginia State Leader Kathy Toussaint

Grandparents for Vaccines Virginia state leader Kathryn (Kathy) Toussaint, mom of three and “Coco” to granddaughters Aria, 4, and Layla, 1, sees fostering and supporting community as an important way to enact positive change. Kathy made community-building her mission during her lengthy career in public education, first as a high school history teacher and then as a principal in northern Virginia. Now retired, Kathy still puts her teaching skills to use as a volunteer English tutor for adults, helping recent arrivals with the language skills they need to navigate their new communities.

A few months ago, Kathy's daughter Erica came across an article about Grandparents for Vaccines and thought her mother would be a good fit for the volunteer-led organization. Kathy laughed when she recalled her daughter saying, “Mom, here's another thing you can do apart from the 7,000 other things you do.”

The article mentioned that GFV was looking for state leaders, which struck a chord with Kathy. She had been following the news about vaccination rates plummeting nationwide, and she felt that taking on the Virginia state leader role would be another way she could help make a difference in her community. Kathy said that she sees grandparents as having a powerful role to play in sharing their own stories about childhood diseases and vaccination with their adult children, and she wants to help others learn how to start those conversations.

Kathy's concerns are also personal. She lives in Fairfax County, VA, and her daughter and granddaughters live nearby. Kathy and Erica are both worried about recent measles outbreaks in the area. “I am moved to tears when I hear reports of young children here in Fairfax County with measles,” Kathy said. “I wonder: *What? How? Why?* It takes what I've always known to be an important part of caring for our community - taking care of children - and brings it to a personal level.

I told my daughter that she needed to be thoughtful about where she was going with the kids because the one-year-old hadn't gotten her first measles vaccine yet,” Kathy said. “As a grandmother, I feel super protective - just like I did with my children, but now even more so. I want to do whatever I can to help give my granddaughters a healthy start in life.”

Thinking back to her days as a teacher and principal, Kathy said that one of her biggest jobs was to make sure her students were healthy and safe. She recognizes how vaccination helps ensure that kids don't miss school due to illness. Kathy also believes that “schools can play an essential role in getting vaccination information out to their students' families.”

Sick children need an adult to stay home with them, and this can present a challenge for working parents. Some vaccine-preventable diseases have long quarantine periods. For example, unvaccinated children and adults exposed to measles are advised to quarantine at home for 21 days unless they receive the first dose of the MMR vaccine within 72 hours of exposure. “For all parents, taking days off of work to care for a sick child is difficult,” Kathy observed, “but for parents who don't get paid sick or family leave, it can be a great financial hardship.”

Kathy thought for a moment about how vaccination, or the lack of it, can impact communities. “One of the things that scares me about the growing number of unvaccinated kids is that it's really going to divide communities - it already has,” she said. “I think all of us are working towards the idea of ‘the village,’ where everyone is welcome, and you can go through a day and encounter different

State Leader Spotlight (continued from page 6)

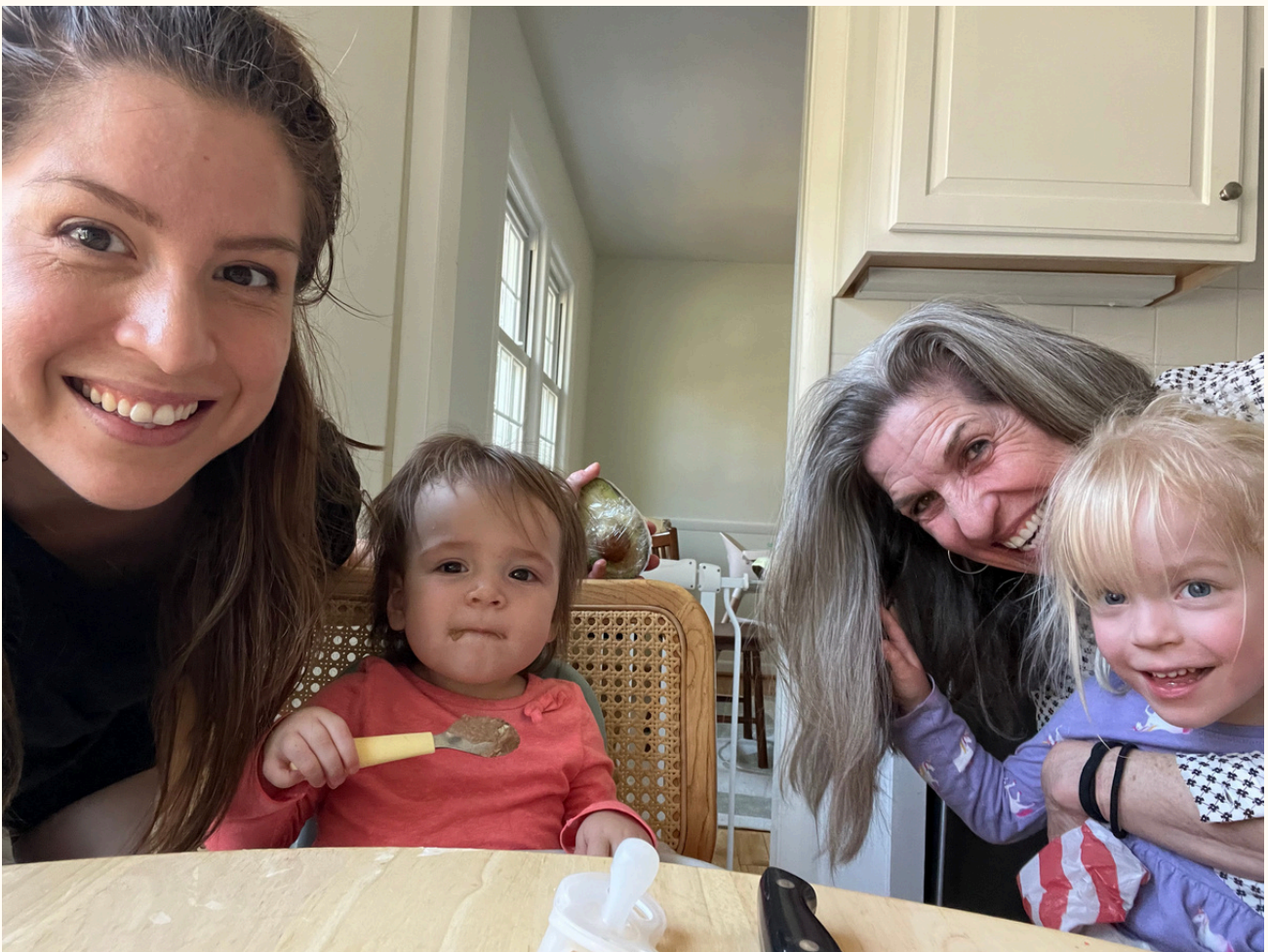
people and not be afraid that children can't play together. But disease outbreaks can change all of that."

A generation ago, today's grandparents relied on experts - usually their child's pediatrician - to explain the vaccines their child needed. "Most people don't know enough about science to make decisions that can be life altering," Kathy mused. "Experts helped parents in my generation understand why vaccines were important. Today's parents now have all kinds of people weighing in, many of whom may not necessarily be experts on this topic. What scares me the most is that people are just disregarding decades of research."

Grandparents remember a time before vaccines - and after them. And they have stories to tell.

"There was a quote I heard the other day about getting older," Kathy said. "*When you get older, you don't want to be youthful. You want to be useful.* By sharing their own stories, grandparents can be useful in helping to turn this thing around."

You can find Virginia state leader Kathy Toussaint's vaccination story video [here](#) on the GFV YouTube channel.



Kathy Toussaint (right) with daughter Erica and granddaughters Layla (l) and Aria

March Conversation Starters

When the announcement of the polio vaccine's success came on April 12, 1955, it triggered a wave of joyous, spontaneous nationwide celebrations. Today, rates for all childhood vaccinations are falling, and news stories about outbreaks of vaccine-preventable illnesses are all too common.

It feels like we're going backward - and we're worried.

After all, grandparents have seen what vaccines made possible – and it's hard to see longstanding public trust in vaccines fading.

Many grandparents have told us that one of their greatest challenges is knowing how to talk about vaccines with hesitant parents or with those simply unsure why immunizations still matter for children today. **Younger generations are often unaware of the real-life impact of vaccine-preventable childhood diseases. Your story can help change that.**

Each issue of the *GFV Newsletter* features one or two brief conversation starters designed to open the door to productive dialogue. These prompts help bring clarity, credibility, and compassion to these important discussions.

Conversation Starters:

- 1. I know there's a lot of confusing information about vaccines out there. What have you seen or read?*
- 2. I've been hearing so much about vaccines lately. What's your take?*

Focus: Lead with curiosity, not correction.

Instead of jumping in with facts, invite others to explain *what they've heard* and *how they feel about it*. Curiosity shows respect. It lowers defenses and opens space for dialogue rather than debate.

Purpose: To make listening the bridge to trust.



Photo by Ina Ranos on Upsplash

Looking for speakers for an upcoming event?
GFV is here to help!

Please let us know, and we will do our best to
accommodate your program.

Email: hello@grandparentsforvaccines.org

Welcome Dr. Kimberly Boller, GFV Inaugural Executive Director!



The rapidly growing Grandparents for Vaccines (GFV) announced on February 10, 2026, that Kimberly Boller, PhD, a national leader in nonprofit management, fundraising and community health education, has assumed the role of Inaugural Executive Director.

Dr. Boller joined Grandparents for Vaccines four months ago as a volunteer and state leader in New Jersey. Her appointment marks the organization's transition from a founder-led effort powered by deeply committed volunteer leaders to a national organization with dedicated leadership and the systems needed to support continued growth.

"Grandparents have a unique and trusted role in families," said Dr. Boller. "Their lived experience with vaccine-preventable diseases and their concern for future generations are powerful. I believe in my heart that although science and medicine are vital to children's health and well-being, elevating the stories of grandparents makes so much sense right now."

As Executive Director, Dr. Boller will focus on building the infrastructure needed to support volunteers, expanding fundraising, and increasing engagement with grandparents across the country to advance the shared goal of keeping our grandchildren safe. A key priority is ensuring that volunteers feel supported, well-organized, and confident that their time and skills are making a difference.

"We have a lot of work to do," Dr. Boller said. "Happily, the founding members and Board of Directors have put so much in place to build on in 2026, and we are poised to add other leaders to the team. My job is to develop all the necessary systems and organizational supports to put Grandparents for Vaccines in a position to attract more volunteers, engage communities, and change the national conversation about vaccines."

Stories That Inspire

A heartfelt thank you to everyone who has shared their powerful, deeply personal experiences. Many of your stories are now featured on the Grandparents for Vaccines YouTube channel. These accounts—told both on video and in writing—bring to life the realities of measles, polio, and other once-devastating diseases, including the severe illnesses and lifelong complications that vaccines now prevent. Your voices remind us all why our stories matter—and why our work continues.

Once Upon a Time....Our stories began in fear.

Together, we're writing a new ending—one of trust, science, and love. That's why we remember. That's why we vaccinate.

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