

Non-Medical Exemption Policies in Child Care Centers: An Analysis of Colorado Practice Compared to National and Global Contexts

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Background

- Immunization policies at child care centers help ensure children, including those who can't be vaccinated, are protected vaccine-preventable diseases
- Some child care centers in Colorado have implemented policies that remove non-medical exemptions (NMEs) to vaccination to enhance the level of protection
- Child care administrators often seek guidance for improving their immunization policies, but few Colorado-specific resources currently exist

Methods

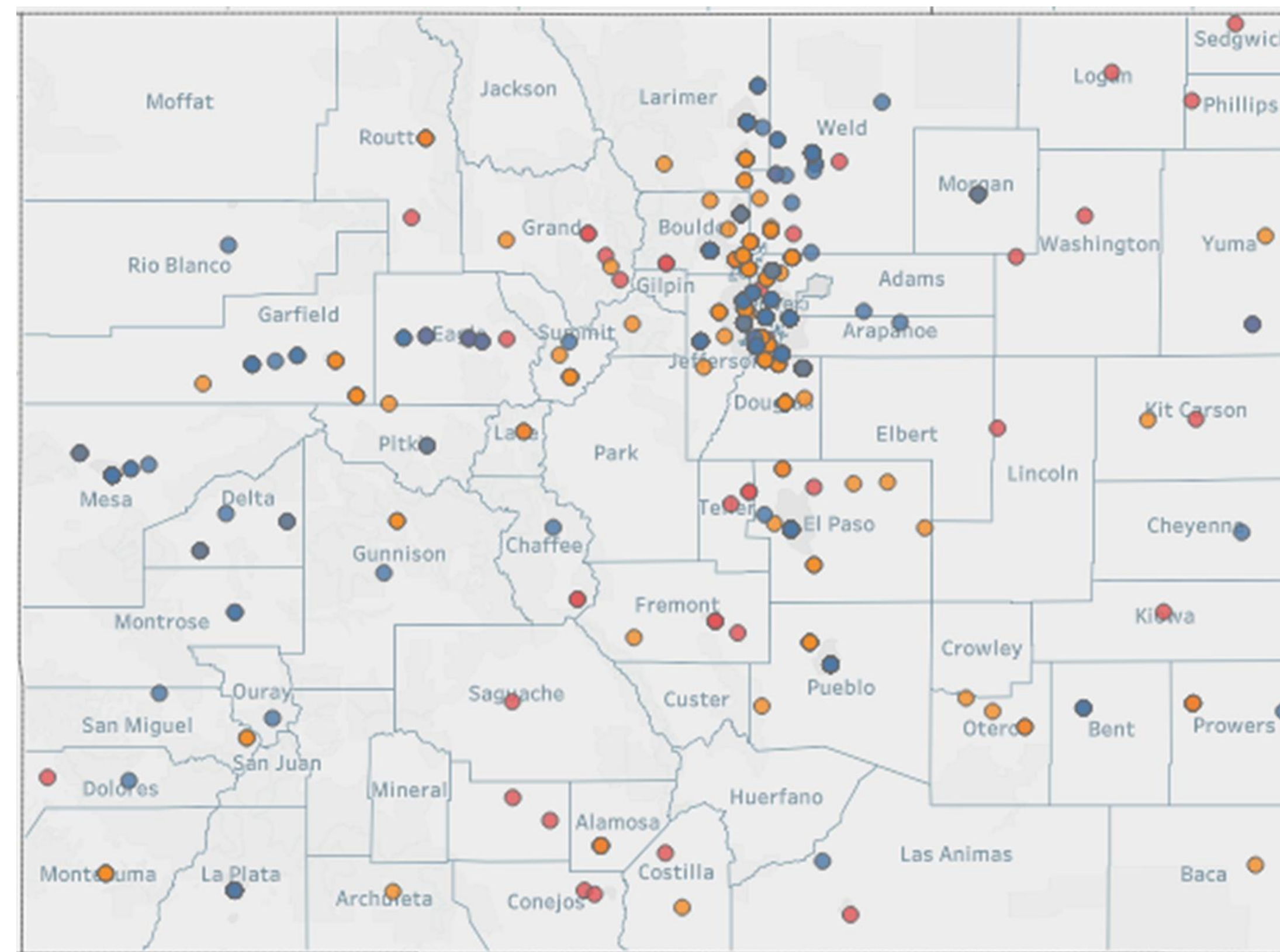
Immunization policies from a random sample of 50% of child care centers that reported immunization data to the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment in 2018-2019 were collected and analyzed to determine policy completeness and if the policy permitted NMEs (personal or religious) to vaccination. Policies were collected from each facilities' website.

Policy Classification

For a child care center's immunization policy to be considered "**complete**" for the purposes of this analysis, it must clearly include all five of the following components:

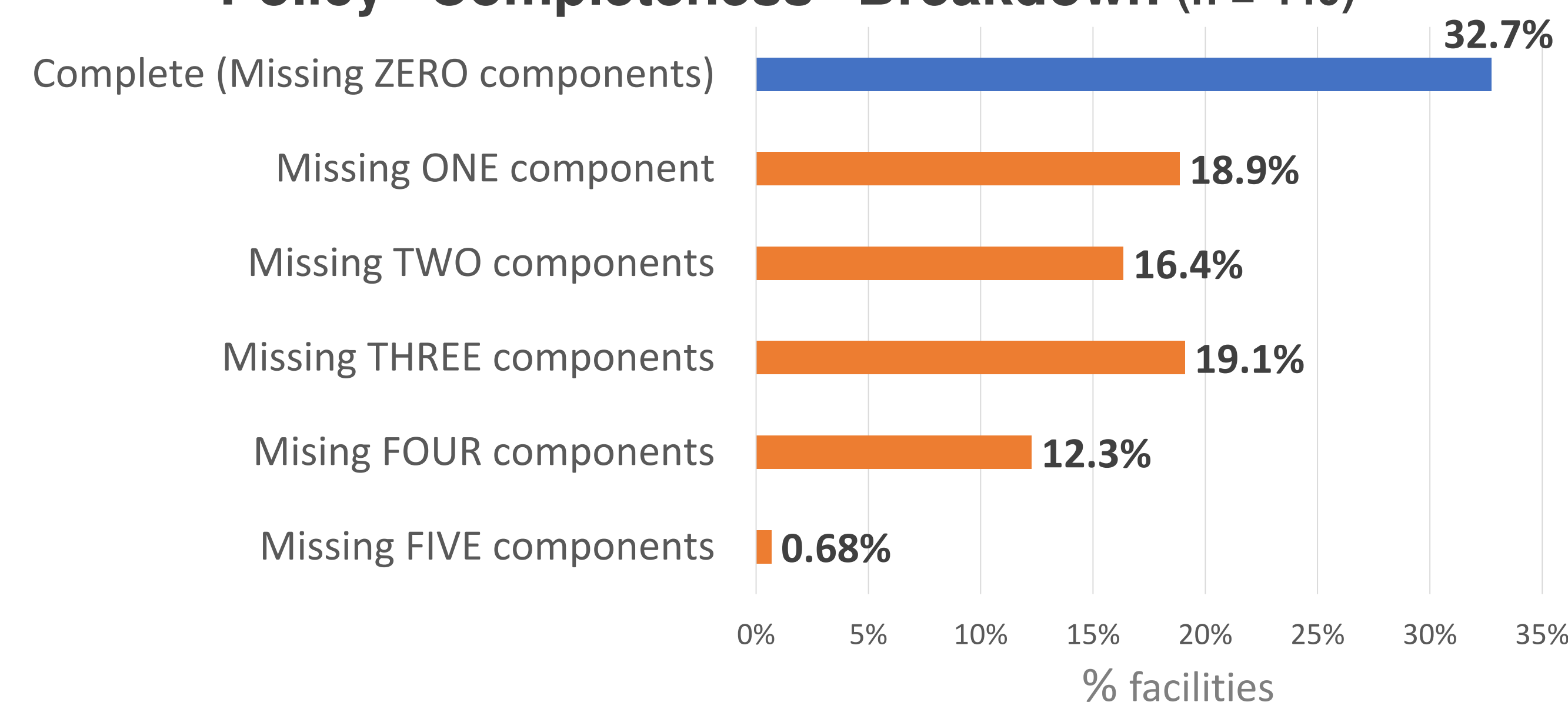
- 1 Which immunizations are required
- 2 When immunizations are required
- 3 How to submit immunization records to the facility
- 4 Consequences if not in compliance
- 5 Whether exemptions to immunizations are available

Map of facilities included in analysis (n=741)



| Map Legend | Policy Classification | Facilities | Students |
|------------|---|------------|--------------|
| ● | No policy found | 301 (41%) | 19,619 (41%) |
| ● | Incomplete (policy missing at least one component) | 296 (40%) | 20,179 (43%) |
| ● | Complete (policy includes all five components) | 144 (19%) | 7,800 (16%) |

Policy "Completeness" Breakdown (n = 440)



Results

- Of the 741 facilities included in this analysis, 40.62% did not have an immunization policy available online
- Of the 440 facilities with a policy available online, 67.27% were incomplete (missing at least one component)
- Only 19 (4.32%) policies in the sample clearly do not allow for NMEs; 41.59% of policies are unclear on whether NMEs are allowed; 54.09% clearly accept NMEs
- The most frequently missed policy component was a reference to required immunizations (only included in 48.64% of policies)
- The majority of policies (65.68%) include a reference to Colorado state immunization law

Conclusions & Recommendations

- The vast majority of Colorado child care centers lack immunization policies that are clear and complete
- Although the majority of policies reference exemptions, many (42%) are unclear on whether NMEs are allowed
- Findings from this work can support child care centers in improving their immunization policy's clarity
- Future work should expand on this framework to examine whether clear immunization policies correlate with increased immunization rates

Acknowledgments

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