Vaccine Policy Letter Assignment

Write to your state’s public health department with a recommendation for a vaccine policy that addresses this question: Under what circumstances, if any, should a state grant exemptions to its school vaccination policy?

Each main section below includes some related points to consider in crafting your position.

*Clearly state your position.* Make a specific recommendation about whether your state should require mandatory vaccination for those vaccines currently recommended by the state public health department for entry into public schools. If you believe exemptions to mandatory vaccination should be allowed, describe which exemptions are acceptable and why.

1. **Should the vaccination policy permit medical, religious, or philosophical exemptions?**
   **Why or why not?** What kind of effects do you think not permitting exemptions would have on overall public support for vaccination programs?

2. **If the vaccination policy does permit exemptions, what must an individual do to qualify for the exemptions?**
   - Some states require parents to simply sign a preprinted exemption form in order to claim an exemption. Do you think that is sufficient? Should a doctor’s note be required?
   - Should individuals have counseling before they are permitted an exemption?
   - Should individuals need to renew their exemptions after a period of time?
   - Should individuals need to demonstrate that they understand the risks and benefits of their choices to themselves and to public health? How should they demonstrate this—by passing a course or getting a doctor’s note stating that the doctor had informed them of the risks?

3. **How should the policy be enforced?**
   - What if people don’t comply with a mandatory requirement? How should public health officials respond?
   - What would happen in the case of a serious public health risk? Would the state public health department have ultimate authority to vaccinate people against their wills?
What are some of the different perspectives about mandatory vaccination? Who are the people who may be affected by this policy? What are their interests? What are the main arguments people might make against your position?

Describe the concept of community immunity and other facts that are relevant to your decision. Provide an explanation of the concept of community immunity and how it influenced your position. What other facts influenced your position?

Describe the ethical considerations related to whether vaccination should be mandatory. Which ethical considerations are important? How do they relate to your policy?

Make a sound argument for your position. Justify your position by describing how your policy addresses the ethical question and how it will affect others. Incorporate elements of both the concept of community immunity and the ethical considerations.