



November 8, 2021

Dear Colleagues:

Thank you for all you have done for children and families since the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic. You have worked incredibly hard to get schools reopened and keep them open, meet students' needs, and address the impacts of COVID-19 on your school communities. We respect all that you have done, and we are honored every day to serve our country alongside you.

Last week, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommended use of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine for children ages five through eleven years old. Today, we reach out to you with encouragement for you to actively support the vaccination process for children in your schools and communities. This is a very exciting development and a significant opportunity to protect some of our youngest learners and our communities.

Vaccination is the best tool we have to keep our students safe from COVID-19, maintain in-person learning, and prevent the closure of schools and cancellation of valued extracurricular activities. And vaccination, paired with prevention strategies that are layered and implemented correctly – such as masking, testing, tracing, distancing and improving ventilation -- can significantly limit COVID-19 transmission. Schools play a vital role in providing access to the vaccine and trusted information on it. Parents listen to school leaders and personnel: according to a Kaiser Family Foundation poll from this summer, parents are approximately twice as likely to get their child vaccinated if their school provides information about the vaccine.<sup>1</sup> We urge you to do all you can to help parents and families learn about the vaccine and get access to it.

To support these aims, we are writing you today with three important requests, and sharing information and resources to help you fulfill them:

**1. Host a COVID-19 Vaccine Clinic at Your School(s)**

First, we ask that all schools serving families of children ages five through eleven years old stand up vaccination clinics on-site at school as feasible, or in dedicated sites in their communities.

Hosting a clinic for your school is simple. The CDC, as well as our Departments, have developed resources and an easy-to-follow toolkit for schools to use in standing clinics up. There is ample funding and resources available through the American Rescue Plan Act's

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<sup>1</sup> Kaiser Family Foundation, "KFF COVID-19 Vaccine Monitor: Parents and the Pandemic," August 11, 2021, <https://www.kff.org/coronavirus-covid-19/poll-finding/kff-covid-19-vaccine-monitor-parents-and-the-pandemic/>.

Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ARP ESSER) fund, as well as reimbursement through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), to ensure that you can cover costs of hosting a clinic – including on-site set-up and operations as well as outreach and engagement activities.

You may reach out to state, territorial, county, tribal, other local health departments or a local COVID-19 vaccine provider to serve as vaccine provider for your clinic – including providers you have partnered with previously for school-located flu or adolescent COVID-19 vaccination clinics. You may also contact pharmacies that are part of the Federal Retail Pharmacy Program to request a school-located clinic. Many of you have already worked with these pharmacy partners on past vaccination efforts in your community, and they stand by ready to help again. The main responsibilities of a *vaccine clinic host* are to provide space and lead community engagement; a *vaccine provider* enrolled in the CDC COVID-19 vaccination program (e.g., a health department, pharmacy, or others in your community) is responsible for storage, handling, and administration of doses. Many providers have scheduling and consent tools that can be shared with parents and families to make sign up as easy as possible.

If, after following the suggestions above, you require assistance finding a vaccine provider for your school-located COVID-19 vaccination clinic, you may request to be matched to a pharmacy in your area by the CDC. To start this matching process, school districts will need to complete a form online. This form, and additional information on the process, will be disseminated to partners and posted on CDC's Considerations for Planning School-Located Vaccination Clinics webpage starting this week.

## **2. Distribute Information About the COVID-19 Vaccine to All Families with Children Ages Five Through Eleven Years Old**

Second, we ask school leaders to reach out to all families with children ages five through eleven years old in their school communities to provide information from trusted sources about the vaccine, and to help them learn where they can get vaccinated.

Parents rely on their children's teachers, principals, school nurses, and other school personnel to help keep their students safe and healthy every school year. The communications you issue – in languages accessible to your parents – will be critical in helping families learn more about the vaccine. We encourage you to use this opportunity to highlight the safety and effectiveness of vaccines and explain why they are critical in protecting individuals from COVID-19, lowering community and family transmission, and keeping children safely in in-person learning.

As parents ourselves, we understand that parents of children who are newly eligible for the vaccine will have questions about the vaccine. We have developed materials to help you prepare for community and parent conversations on the vaccine and answer a wide array of common questions. Schools and districts can:

- Print out this one-page fact sheet on getting vaccinated and send it home with students for their parents to review.

- Post about getting vaccinated on your school or school district’s websites and social media accounts, using “We Can Do This” materials found [here](#).
- Email parents about the importance of getting vaccinated, and direct them to trusted websites like the CDC [COVID-19 Vaccines for Children and Teens](#) website for more information.
- Partner with local community-based organizations to reach parents in your community in accessible ways.

### **3. Hold Conversations with Your School Communities on the COVID-19 Vaccine**

Third, we ask you to host community engagements on the COVID-19 vaccines with your parents and school communities, in partnership with local pediatricians and other trusted medical voices in your area.

Schools have approached community engagement on the vaccine using a variety of means, including in-person and virtual townhalls, small group conversations, co-hosting discussions with Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) and other parent-serving organizations, and more. These conversations are crucial in helping families learn more about the vaccine and giving them an opportunity to be able to ask questions in real time of trusted professionals. Hosting these conversations in partnership with medical professionals in your community can help ensure that parents have access to all the information they need to make their vaccine decisions.

We encourage you to reach out to pediatricians, family physicians, hospitals, early care and education programs, other child and family serving organizations, and other medical partners and providers in your community to host these engagements. If needed, you may reach out to the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) or other local medical associations to get connected with a local pediatrician, family physician, or other clinician to invite to participate or speak at vaccine-related events. To invite a pediatrician to speak to your community about the COVID-19 vaccine, reach out to [kids1st@aap.org](mailto:kids1st@aap.org) to make a request and share the details of your event.

You can also partner with community- or faith-based organizations and others to get students and/families vaccinated. We also encourage you to collaborate with student leaders to make efforts fun and get young people to participate.

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Increasing vaccination rates will help to bolster public health and reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission in your community. Supporting students and families in getting vaccinated against COVID-19, including providing paid time off to your school staff to get their children vaccinated, is an allowable use of ARP funds. We strongly encourage schools to provide staff with paid time off in order to get their children vaccinated. For more information about uses of the ESSER and Governor’s Emergency Education Relief (GEER) programs, and the Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Program, and how they can support vaccinations, please see the [Frequently Asked Questions about uses of the ESSER and GEER funds for COVID-19 vaccinations](#).

We need your help now more than ever to continue to protect our communities and our children. Thank you again for your dedication to keeping students and your communities safe. As trusted partners in your communities, we ask that you do all that you can to help accelerate vaccination among school-age children. Please visit and use our resources at [We Can Do This](#) to help make your efforts a success.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact our Health and Human Services Team at [covidslvmatching@cdc.gov](mailto:covidslvmatching@cdc.gov).

We know that, if we work as a team, we can do this!

Sincerely,



Xavier Becerra  
U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services



Miguel A. Cardona, Ed.D.  
U.S. Secretary of Education