



June 27, 2022

Dear Colleagues:

Staff of early care and education (ECE) programs and schools are essential workers. As someone who serves in this role, you have been at the forefront of the pandemic response, striving to provide safe and supportive early care, learning and school environments for our most precious resource - our children. Thank you for all that you have done, and continue to do, in support of children and families during the COVID-19 pandemic. We appreciate your leadership, dedication, perseverance, and resilience, and honor your efforts that consistently put the needs of children first.

On June 18, 2022, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommended that children between the ages six months to five years old should receive the COVID-19 vaccine. Vaccination is the leading public health strategy for minimizing COVID-19 transmission and preventing severe illness. We know from other routine childhood immunizations that vaccines have led to major improvements in children's health. Likewise, vaccination against COVID-19 is one more way we can prepare our children to thrive. This landmark recommendation provides us with another powerful tool to protect children, families, and ECE and school staff. It will help create a future where children can more safely participate in ECE programs and schools, and parents experience fewer interruptions from these services.

As discussed in the [updated operational guidance](#) for K-12 schools and ECE programs, a layered [prevention](#) strategy is still crucially important, including in ECE and school settings. Most important, encouraging all students and staff to stay up to date on routine vaccinations, including the COVID-19 vaccine, is essential. Improving ventilation, opening doors and windows, and going outside when possible, are other important strategies. Communities should continue to follow masking recommendations according to CDC's COVID-19 Community Levels, and all individuals should feel free to mask regardless of level should they so choose. Hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette (like covering your mouth when coughing), staying home when sick, and cleaning and disinfection remain important in combating illness.

As trusted messengers, staff of ECE programs and schools play a vital role in spreading the good news that COVID-19 vaccination is available for our youngest children. You are essential in encouraging parents and guardians to learn about and access vaccines for all children 6 months of age and older, which will be available free at no cost. Today, we are writing to you with three important requests and sharing resources that will help you fulfill them:

## **1. Encourage parents to connect with trusted medical providers and health systems in your community**

As educators, you know the children and families in your schools and ECE programs in the community. For newly eligible children, we encourage parents and guardians to reach out to their child's medical provider. Parents and guardians have always consulted their medical providers on important decisions for their child's health, in a setting they know and trust. The COVID-19 vaccine is no different. According to CDC, a substantial number of young children have fallen behind schedule on their routine childhood immunizations because of the disruption of the pandemic.<sup>1</sup> In addition to receiving a COVID-19 vaccine, a visit to a pediatric provider creates the opportunity for children to catch up with their well child care, including [routine vaccinations](#) and developmentally appropriate screenings – resulting in healthier children and a safer environment for everyone.

Not every child has a medical provider for their routine care, and for these children, we encourage school and ECE administrators to reach out to state, territorial, county, and tribal health departments, as well as [federally qualified health centers](#). Creating connections with these local resources can simplify the vaccination process for families and make it more likely that they will receive necessary medical care. In addition, please encourage families to use [vaccines.gov](#) to find and access local vaccination sites. As a bridge between families and the health system, you play a vital role in supporting vaccination efforts.

## **2. Distribute information about the COVID-19 vaccine to all families with children eligible for vaccination**

We also ask that you share information about vaccination with the parents and guardians of children under your care. ECE programs and schools play an important role in providing access to trusted information that will support parents and caregivers' decisions to get their children vaccinated.

We understand there may be many questions and misperceptions about the vaccine, and HHS has developed materials to help you [navigate these conversations](#). You can find early childhood specific resources from the [Office of Head Start](#) and [CDC](#). To reach parents and caregivers in your community, we recommend you partner with local community-based organizations, such as child care resource and referral agencies, faith-based organizations, food banks, home visiting and family support programs, family resource and community centers, and schools. We also recommend you post about vaccine availability on your website and social media accounts using materials found on [wecandothis.hhs.gov](#) and from [CDC](#), and send messages to parents about the importance of getting vaccinated.

## **3. Partner with healthcare providers to host a COVID-19 vaccination clinic at your facility or in your neighborhood**

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<sup>1</sup> Patel B, Murthy, Zell E, et al. Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Administration of Selected Routine Childhood and Adolescent Vaccinations — 10 U.S. Jurisdictions, March–September 2020. [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report \(MMWR\)](#)

Where it is feasible, schools and ECE programs may consider partnering with a vaccine provider to host a vaccination clinic at your program or in your community. Multiple resources are available to help you host a vaccine clinic, including easy-to-follow toolkits developed by [CDC](#) and [wecandothis.hhs.gov](#). If you have any questions about vaccination clinics, please contact CDC at [eocevent583@cdc.gov](mailto:eocevent583@cdc.gov).

For help with identifying an appropriate vaccine provider for a vaccine clinic at your facility, ECE programs and schools should follow existing [guidance](#) including from your [local health department](#). You can also consider partnering with providers that other schools and ECE programs have used in your area for flu vaccination clinics or COVID-19 vaccination clinics. Programs can also visit [vaccines.gov](#) to identify vaccine providers near them.

Ample funding and resources are available through the American Rescue Plan Act's Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief fund, as well as reimbursement through the [Federal Emergency Management Agency](#), to ensure that you can cover costs of hosting a clinic -- including set-up and operations as well as outreach and engagement activities.

With the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) authorization and CDC recommendation of COVID-19 vaccination for our youngest children, we can create a better future for everyone -- a future where all our loved ones are protected, and we can learn, work, and play in safety. ECE program and school staff are front-line leaders in the pandemic response. Please help us create an atmosphere of hope by supporting your families in accessing the vaccine for their children in any way you can. Together, we can do this!

Sincerely,

/s/

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

/s/

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