



ADMINISTRATION FOR
CHILDREN & FAMILIES

Office of Community Services | 330 C Street, S.W., Washington, DC 20201
www.acf.hhs.gov/ocs

Community Services Block Grant

Dear Colleague Letter

DCL#: CSBG-DCL-2021-26
DATE: September 9, 2021
TO: CSBG Network
SUBJECT: Critical Update: Office of Head Start Announcement Regarding President Biden's New Vaccine Mandate
ATTACHMENT(S): N/A

Dear Community Action Agencies providing Head Start and Early Head Start services,

For over 56 years, Head Start programs and their staff have been providing comprehensive services to children and their families across the country. For the past 19 months, you have been on the frontlines providing support to families despite the immense challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. In the midst of this global pandemic, you – our dedicated, tenacious, and unyielding colleagues – have continued to execute Head Start’s mission to promote school readiness for our young children. And for that, we are extremely grateful, and we thank you for your incredible service during this time.

The Office of Head Start (OHS) and the Office of Community Services (OCS) continue to support programs through the evolving stages and challenges of the pandemic. We are, and have been, steadfast in this approach through changes in administration and leadership. This will not change as we move forward.

Today, President Biden announced a six-pronged strategy to combat the variants of the COVID-19 pandemic. The plan includes a requirement that Head Start staff, across the country, take necessary steps to protect our youngest population by receiving their COVID-19 vaccination.

One of the core tenants of Head Start is health – making sure our children receive health and developmental screenings, nutritious meals, oral health, and mental health support. Community action agencies are well positioned to connect families with medical, dental, and mental health services and ensure that children are receiving the services they need. And, as

we continue to fight the COVID-19 pandemic, one of the best tools we have to keep ourselves, our children, and their families as safe and healthy as possible is the COVID-19 vaccine.

The vaccines are not only safe and recommended by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Centers for Diseases Control and Prevention (CDC), they are also very effective at preventing severe disease, hospitalization, and death from the COVID-19 virus and the current variants of the virus, including the Delta variant.

The vaccines are free and are currently approved for children age 12 and older. However, because COVID-19 vaccines have not yet been approved for young children, it is critically important that our Head Start teachers and staff be fully vaccinated.

To help ensure the health and safety of children, families, and their communities, beginning January 2022, all Head Start teachers and program staff will be required to be vaccinated.

As new variants are much more contagious than the original COVID-19 virus, this action will help more programs and early childhood centers safely remain open and help provide comfort to the many parents and guardians that rely on them every day to keep their children safe.

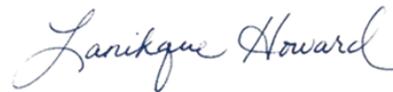
If you have questions about the COVID-19 vaccines or how to get vaccinated, please visit www.cdc.gov. The science continues to show us how essential and effective vaccines are, and we must do everything we can to protect our Head Start children, families, and each other from the COVID-19 virus.

We cannot thank you enough for the work you do each and every day on behalf of the one million children and families we serve.

In truth, unity, and love,



Dr. Bernadine Futrell
Director
Office of Head Start



Dr. Lanikque Howard
Director
Office of Community Services