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HEALTH



October 28, 2021

Dear School Leaders:

As we prepare for federal recommendations for COVID-19 vaccinations for children ages 5-11, which could come as soon as the first week of November, we are writing to provide you with the latest information and to strongly encourage schools and local communities to take an active role in promoting and administering COVID-19 vaccinations for this age group.

It is our shared goal to keep all students in the classroom, where we know the most effective learning takes place, and vaccines for school-age children are an extremely important tool to help keep students healthy and achieve that goal. The COVID-19 vaccine has been shown to be [safe and effective](#), and we are asking for your help to urge parents to get their children vaccinated as the best way to protect themselves and our school community, and to continue to facilitate in-person learning.

We wanted to make you aware of opportunities and resources to achieve increased vaccination rates in younger children and offer some considerations in planning your approach.

Promotion and Parent Engagement

Now is a good time to engage with parents and parent associations (PTAs, PTOs) to encourage vaccination and provide resources and information. We suggest:

- Sending a tailored version of the **attached template letter** to all parents/guardians
- Posting information about vaccine locations, vaccine safety information, and helpful Q&As (available at www.mass.gov/covidvaccine) to **school websites and message boards**
- **Meeting with your PTA/PTO** to discuss ways to reach a wider parent audience
- **Working with your athletics department** to further encourage COVID-19 vaccination among students and their parents

Local or School-based Vaccination Clinics

Since May, many schools have hosted COVID-19 vaccination clinics on campus, making vaccination convenient and easy for busy families. We urge all schools to host on-site vaccination clinics once children ages 5-11 are eligible. There are several options for local vaccination administration:

- **Partnering with Your Local Board of Health.** Reach out to your local board of health or health department to ask if they plan to offer pediatric vaccine clinics that you could promote or if they would be able to offer an on-site clinic at any of your schools.

- **Partnering with a Local Provider Practice.** Consider connecting with local healthcare providers or the local Medical Reserve Corps to request their participation in administering vaccinations at school clinics.
- **Administering at Your School Based Health Center.** If you have a school-based health center in your community, and they are enrolled in MCVF for administration of other vaccines, they may administer the COVID-19 vaccine. Interested SBHCs should reach out to their parent organizations (community health centers or hospitals) to order the pediatric COVID-19 vaccine.
- **Engaging a Mobile Provider:** Visit mass.gov/MobileVax to learn about options for hosting a mobile clinic on site. Download the request form [here](#).

Age-Specific Considerations

For ages 5-11, there are a few considerations when planning outreach and vaccination:

- Pediatric Primary Care Providers are a good resource for parents in this age group for information and vaccination. Schools may want to consider partnering with local pediatricians to invite them to attend PTO/PTA meetings or to sign onto communications.
- If holding school clinics, schedule immediately before or after school, in the evening, or on weekends so that a parent or guardian can accompany their child.

As we move forward together to increase COVID-19 vaccination in Massachusetts and encourage vaccination among children ages 5-11, we welcome your support and involvement in these vaccination efforts. We continue to urge all school personnel and students to get vaccinated to protect themselves, their families, and our school communities.

We appreciate your assistance to keep all of our faculty, staff, volunteers, and students safe and healthy this fall and all year long. Please contact the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's Rapid Response Help Center at 781-338-3500 with any questions.

Margret R. Cooke
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