Vaccine Operational Guidance for K-12 Schools

1. **Background**

As of June 2022, children ages 6 months and up can now receive a safe and effective COVID-19 vaccine. This operational guidance is intended to help school leaders support their students and employees in getting vaccinated.

**For more information:**
Visit NCDHHS’s website on Vaccines for Children and CDC’s COVID-19 Vaccine for Children and Teens. Additionally, the US Department of Health and Human Services’ website We Can Do This includes a Toolkit of school-specific materials, including a guide to on-site vaccination clinics for schools.

2. **Where can school employees and students get a vaccine?**

Students and employees can get vaccinated by providers enrolled in the COVID-19 Vaccination Program. Students and employees do not need a prescription and they are free to everyone, regardless of whether you have health insurance. Vaccines are available in every county, in a variety of locations including:

- Hospitals and health systems
- Federally qualified health centers and community health centers
- Local health departments
- Pharmacies for anyone ages 3 and up (Children ages 6 months through 2 years can only receive their vaccine at a doctor’s office or local health center where the correct dose for this age is available)
- Primary care providers (i.e., pediatrician’s offices)

You can learn which vaccine providers are near you by visiting Find a Vaccine Location (myspot.nc.gov).

School leaders are also encouraged to partner with a vaccine provider to host or support a vaccine clinic for their school. See Appendix 3 for more information.

3. **How can school leaders support their eligible students and employees in getting vaccinated?**

**Share Information:**

One critical way that school leaders can help their students and employees get vaccinated is by sharing the latest information about the COVID vaccine.
Consider taking the following steps to share information with employees and student families about the COVID-19 vaccine:

- Send letters, text messages or email blasts (see Appendix 2).
- Schedule meetings with team members to learn about the COVID-19 vaccine and how to get vaccinated. (Consider offering meetings in other languages, as appropriate, based on population.)
- Display posters and other printed materials in places where people spend the most time.
- Post vaccine information on school district, school or other partner’s social media or worksite television monitors.
- Partner with trusted community leaders to promote getting vaccinated.
- Review and share resources from NCDHHS’s website on Vaccines for Children and CDC’s COVID-19 Vaccine for Children and Teens.
- For additional resources, see Appendix 1.

School leaders can also attend a NC Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) COVID 101 presentation in order to direct employees to trusted sources of information. Please submit a request if your school district or school is interested in helping to organize a COVID 101 presentation (in English or Spanish), led by NCDHHS presenters.

**Promote Vaccine Confidence:**

“Vaccine confidence” is the trust that people have in recommended vaccines. Right now, families in your school community may be wading through a lot of information—and misinformation—to make decisions about COVID-19 vaccinations.

- Be prepared to address questions and address misinformation about the COVID-19 vaccine with your students and their families by developing or sharing materials from credible sources. The CDC has developed some useful tips for talking about COVID-19 vaccines.
- Consider preparing a frequently asked question (FAQ) document about COVID-19 vaccines. Both NCDHHS and CDC have readily available answers to parent’s frequently asked questions on vaccines.
- Include COVID-19 vaccine fact sheets with other information given to parents and caregivers and added to school and school district websites.
- Share resources from NCDHHS’ toolkit—including flyers, talking points and social media.

School leaders can also talk to their students and employees about the importance of the vaccine for their own health and the health of their families and communities. Vaccine information should be given to people in their native languages, whenever possible, using clear language and trusted means of communication.

4. **Roles and responsibilities**

**School Administrators (Superintendents, School Principals, etc.)**

- Initiate outreach steps (see resources in Appendix 1 Appendix 2)
  - Share general information with parents, students, and staff about where and how people can get vaccinated.
• Reach out to your local vaccine providers to host or support vaccine events. (see details in Appendix 3).

• Identify a champion or group of champions within different groups of staff (e.g., bus drivers, cafeteria workers, teachers, etc.) to encourage employees to get the vaccine.

School Employees (e.g., bus drivers, cafeteria workers, custodial staff, school nurses, teachers and teaching assistance, administrators)

• Talk to school leadership about how they are encouraging and supporting their students and employees to access vaccination.

• Use the Find My Vaccine Location tool to find a vaccine provider in the area and contact them to get an appointment, if needed. Enter a zip code to find nearby vaccine providers. Many vaccine providers will update websites to indicate available vaccine products, times, dates, and locations and how to schedule an appointment if needed.

• Call the NC COVID-19 Vaccine Help Center (1-877-490-6642).

Vaccine Providers (e.g., hospitals, local health departments, pharmacies, primary care providers)

• Coordinate with school leaders to develop partnerships to vaccinate students and school staff and coordinate on site clinics if desired by districts/schools.

Students/Parents

• Use the Find My Vaccine Location tool to find a vaccine provider in the area and contact them to get an appointment, if needed. Enter a zip code to find nearby vaccine providers. Many vaccine providers will update websites to indicate available vaccine products, times, dates, and locations and how to schedule an appointment if needed.

• Call the NC COVID-19 Vaccine Help Center (1-877-490-6642).

• Students already vaccinated can encourage and educate friends and classmates about the benefits of being vaccinated.

• Students already vaccinated can use social media as a platform to spread awareness for upcoming vaccination events and COVID-19 information.
5. **How can school leaders incentivize their students and employees to become vaccinated?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example 1: Vaccinations at Annual Well Visits and Sports Physicals</th>
<th>Example 2: Prize Drawings</th>
<th>Example 3: School Supply Drives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Schools can work with the local health department or a local primary care provider to offer the COVID-19 vaccine at well visits and other visits. Pre-participation physical evaluations are required for students to participate in sports or camps.</td>
<td>School districts can support vaccinations by creating a drawing for all vaccinated students. Prize packages could include school supplies, gift cards, and additional resources that may be useful to the student or employee.</td>
<td>School districts can offer vaccination as part of school sponsored events with live music, food trucks, and/or giveaways like school supplies or popsicles.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 1.
Additional Resources to Share with Staff and Parents/Families

**Resources** to share with staff about the COVID-19 vaccine:

- **Flyers and Fact Sheets:** Print and share flyers in your community.
  - Bilingual - Your Best Shot Against COVID-19
  - Simple Flyer – English / Spanish
  - Postcard Handout – English / Spanish
- **Videos:** Post on social media, play on internal displays, and share on websites and in newsletters.
  - English Video Library / Spanish Video Library featuring faith leaders, community leaders, frontline workers, older North Carolinians and more.
- **Social Media Graphics:** Post on social media channels using NCDHHS Social Media Graphics.
- **FAQs:** Answer frequent questions from staff about the vaccine. NCDHHS frequently asked questions are updated regularly and include a section specific to questions from parents.
- **Collect and Share Stories:** Share stories of people explaining why they got or plan to get the vaccine. Use this tip sheet to record and share a video or photo.
  - Tip Sheet to Record Your Vaccine Selfie – English / Spanish
- **Website:** Link to NCDHHS Vaccine websites.
  - YourSpotYourShot.nc.gov
  - Vacunate.nc.gov

Additional resources for parents on COVID-19 vaccines:

- **Website** (English/Spanish)
- **PSAs**
  - COVID-19 Vaccines are Safe and Effective for Everyone Five and Older
  - Protect Your Children Against COVID-19 with the Vaccine
  - Ask Your Pediatrician About Your Child’s COVID-19 Vaccine
- **Safety Flyer (Bilingual)**
- **Social Media**
- **Editable event flyers (Bilingual)**
Appendix 2.
Template Email to School Employees and Families

School leaders can customize this template email and share with employees.

Dear <NAME>,

It is strongly recommended that all eligible individuals receive the COVID-19 vaccine. We have included some more information about the safety and effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccinations that are currently available in the US:

- The vaccines are tested, safe, and effective.
  - Scientists had a head start in developing all of the vaccines. They are built on decades of research. Both mRNA and viral-vector vaccines technology benefit from over 30 years of scientific work and development. With more recent developments in vaccine technology over the last decade and immense investment, these two technologies are used to help us fight COVID-19 without skipping any steps in development, testing, or clinical trials.
  - Vaccines were found to help prevent COVID-19 and are effective in preventing hospitalization and death, with no serious safety concerns noted in the clinical trials.
  - The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) makes sure the vaccines are safe and can prevent people from getting COVID-19. Like all drugs, vaccine safety continues to be monitored following use.
- People cannot get COVID-19 from the vaccine.
  - Some individuals may have temporary reactions like a sore arm, headache or feeling tired and achy for a day or two after receiving the vaccine.
- The vaccines are free of charge to all North Carolina residents.

Here are some next steps to share about getting vaccinated:

- Go to Find My Vaccine Location, search by your zip code, and contact one of the local vaccine providers on the list, OR
- Call the NC COVID-19 Vaccine Help Center (1-877-490-6642) to get help finding a vaccine provider in every community.

[Optional text to include if a school district or school is partnering with a vaccine provider on a vaccine event or reserved appointments, please insert all options that are available to employees:

- Schedule a vaccination appointment by calling <insert phone number>; OR
- Schedule a vaccination appointment using this link <insert link>; OR
- Respond to this message indicating interest in being vaccinated against COVID-19, and someone will help get an appointment scheduled.

Thank you for your consideration. Please contact <<insert contact person>> with questions or concerns.
School leaders can customize this template email and share with parents and families.

Dear <NAME>,

Children are vulnerable to the COVID-19 virus just like everyone else. Cases of COVID-19 among children in the U.S. rose approximately 240% during the most recent surge, demonstrating a need to protect children from the disease. The vaccine provides a safe, tested way to help keep them healthy and get kids back to safely being with their family and friends.

- **The vaccine is widely available across the state.** Children ages 6 months and up can now get vaccinated.

- **Vaccination is free.** COVID-19 vaccines are always free, regardless of insurance and immigration status. The only thing required is parental consent.

- **Temporary and minimal side effects.** Children may experience a sore arm and feeling tired or achy for a day or two. The risks of serious side effects from the vaccine are far less than the risk of serious illness from COVID-19.

[Optional text to include if a school district or school is partnering with a vaccine provider on a vaccine event or reserved appointments, please insert all options that are available to students:]

- Schedule a vaccination appointment by calling <insert phone number>; OR
- Schedule a vaccination appointment using this link <insert link>; OR
- Respond to this message indicating interest in being vaccinated against COVID-19, and someone will help get an appointment scheduled.

To learn more visit NCDHHS’s website on Vaccines for children and CDC’s [COVID-19 Vaccine for Children and Teens](https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/).
Appendix 3.
Steps for School Leaders to Coordinate with Vaccine Providers

Below are three examples of models that school leaders can discuss with vaccine providers in their area. For examples 1 and 2, the first step is for an individual school or school district leadership to reach out to a vaccine provider in their area.

**Example Vaccine Models for Students and School Employees**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example 1: Vaccine Event On-Site at School Facility</th>
<th>Example 2: Vaccine Provider Hosts Special Vaccine Event for School</th>
<th>Example 3: Support Getting Vaccinated Independently</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Partnership between school district or individual school and vaccine provider for on-site vaccine event. School or district can support vaccinations by scheduling appointments, organizing event logistics, and supporting event staffing.</td>
<td>Partnership between school district or individual school and vaccine provider who hosts special event at their clinic or other community location. School or district can support vaccinations by scheduling appointments, supporting event staffing and providing school buses for transportation.</td>
<td>Share information and encourage vaccination to facilitate student families seeking vaccination on their own at any vaccine provider.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** Because temporary reactions can occur after vaccination (e.g., headache, feeling tired and achy for a day or two after receiving the vaccine), staggering vaccination for employees to avoid any critical staffing shortages may be needed. For example, all staff should not be vaccinated on the same day if staff absences from temporary post-vaccine reactions on the following day(s) would lead to critical staffing shortages.