



StrongSchoolsNC

Vaccine Operational Guidance for Schools

Updated March 2, 2021

1. Background

This operational guidance includes recommendations intended to help school leaders support their employees in getting vaccinated, as vaccine supply becomes available.

North Carolina will open vaccinations to school and child care employees starting Wednesday, February 24, 2021. **This means that school and child care staff will be eligible to receive a vaccination on February 24. However, because of very limited vaccine supply, this does not guarantee that school and child care staff will be able to get an appointment or get vaccinated as of that date.** On March 3rd, eligibility will further open to other frontline essential workers in Group 3.

Initially, some vaccine providers may be ready to vaccinate school and child care employees as early as February 24, 2021, while other vaccine providers may continue to focus on vaccinating Group 1 (health care workers and long term care facility staff/residents) and Group 2 (adults ages 65 and older) if they are still experiencing significant demand from these populations. See Section 3 for more information on who is a *vaccine provider*. School leaders will need to work with their local vaccine providers to determine whether or not they are opening vaccine distribution to schools and child care staff on February 24th.

Because of extremely limited supply of vaccines, it is unlikely that vaccine providers will be able to complete vaccinations for all school and child care staff in the period of February 24 to March 3. Even if school and child care staff are not able to get an appointment or vaccination within this period, they will continue to be eligible for vaccination after March 3, when eligibility opens to other frontline essential workers.

2. Which school and child care staff are eligible to get vaccinated as part of Group 3?

Starting February 24, 2021, North Carolina will open vaccinations to the following groups of school and child care staff who are working on-site or anticipate a return to an in-person work setting, including staff who:

Work in the following settings:

Child Care Settings	K-12 School Settings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child Care Centers Pre-Kindergarten Programs Head Start & Early Head Start Programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Traditional Public Schools Charter Schools Private/Non-Public Schools



- Pre-School Programs
- Family Child Care Homes

AND

Work in the following roles (this list is not exhaustive):

Child Care Roles	K-12 School Roles
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers • Teacher assistants • Student teachers • Owners, directors, supervisors • Bus and van drivers • Family support staff • Food service workers • On-site program, administrative, & support staff • Custodial and maintenance staff • Therapists and medical staff • Required on-site consultants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers • Teacher assistants • Student and substitute teachers • Special education teachers and therapists • School and district administrators • School transportation drivers • Food service workers • School support staff (e.g., guidance counselors, social workers, speech language pathologists) • Custodial and maintenance staff • Media & IT specialists • School safety personnel • Librarians • School administrative staff • Instructional support staff • School Nurses (eligible in Group 1)

3. Where can eligible school employees get a vaccine?

Eligible employees can get vaccinated by any vaccine provider in North Carolina. Currently, vaccinations are being provided by:

- Most hospitals and health systems
- Many federally qualified health centers and community health centers
- All local health departments
- Some pharmacies, including some Walgreens locations (in partnership with the federal government)
- Some primary care providers

North Carolina has distributed vaccine to providers based on their ability and capacity to quickly administer vaccines and reach eligible populations. Because COVID-19 vaccine supply is very limited, most doctors' offices are not yet offering vaccinations. The number of vaccine providers offering vaccines will increase as more COVID-19 vaccine doses become available in the state. You can learn which vaccine providers are near you by visiting Find a Vaccine Location (myspot.nc.gov).



4. How can school district leaders and private/charter school leaders support their eligible employees in getting vaccinated?

There are several ways that school district leaders and private/charter school leaders can help their frontline essential employees get vaccinated. Below are three examples of models that school leaders can discuss with vaccine providers in their area. Many vaccine providers have been vaccinating people for weeks, and have developed processes that look different across the state. The model that your local vaccine provider can implement will depend significantly on how much vaccine and how many vaccinating staff are available. For Examples 1 and 2, the first step is for school district leadership to reach out to a vaccine provider in their area.

Example Vaccine Models for School Employees

Example 1: Vaccine Event On-Site at School Facility	Example 2: Vaccine Provider Hosts Special Vaccine Event for School Staff	Example 3: Support Employee Getting Vaccinated Independently
Partnership between school district and vaccine provider for on-site vaccine event. School district can support vaccinations by scheduling appointments, organizing event logistics, and supporting event staffing.	Partnership between school district and vaccine provider who hosts special event at their clinic or other community location. School district can support vaccinations by scheduling appointments and supporting event staffing.	An employee seeks vaccination on their own at any vaccine provider, without having to go through their employer.

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

The following are roles that school district leaders or private/charter school leaders could play in supporting their employees to get vaccinated, depending on which model their local vaccine provider is able to implement on behalf of their staff.



Key School Roles	Example 1: Vaccine Event On- Site at School Facility	Example 2: Vaccine Provider Hosts Special Vaccine Event for School Staff	Example 3: Support Employee Getting Vaccinated Independently
Initiate Employee Outreach			
Notify staff about their eligibility and encourage them to get vaccinated when it is available to them (See Appendix 1 for resources)	☐	☐	☐
Share general information about how and where employees can get vaccinated (See Appendix 2 for a letter template)	☐	☐	☐
Coordinate with local vaccine provider to... (see Appendix 3)			
Notify employees of reserved appointments and help schedule when possible	☐	☐	
Provide transportation for employees to vaccination events	☑	☑	
Support vaccination event staffing	☑	☑	
Organize vaccine event logistics	☑		

5. Roles and responsibilities

School Administrators (Superintendents, School Principals, etc.)

- Initiate employee outreach steps (see details in [Appendix 1](#) and [Appendix 2](#))
 - Identify eligible school employees and contractors and notify them that they are eligible for vaccination as part of Group 3.
 - Encourage your employees to take their shot when it is available to them.
 - Share general information about where and how employees can get vaccinated.
 - Set expectations that supplies are limited, so employees will likely have to wait.
- Larger districts may wish to consider reaching out to multiple vaccine providers given their larger number of employees (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 when it is available. Champions may be individuals who are early adopters to get their vaccine when it is available to them, and meet regularly to develop and implement strategies to promote the vaccine to their peers.



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 working to help their employees access vaccination.
- Use the [Find My Vaccine Location](#) tool to find a vaccine provider near you and contact them to get an appointment. Enter your zip code to find nearby vaccine providers. You can contact the vaccine provider(s) directly to confirm availability and schedule appointments. Many vaccine providers will update their website to indicate when they are planning to open vaccinations to school and child care staff.
- Call the NC COVID-19 Vaccine Help Center (1-877-490-6642).

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

- Coordinate with school leaders to develop partnerships to vaccinate school staff who work in your county.



Appendix 1.

Communications Steps: Notify School Staff About Their Eligibility for Vaccination and Encourage Them to Get Vaccinated When It is Available to Them

School districts and schools should notify employees and any contractors who work on-site that they are eligible to get vaccinated starting February 24. However, they should set expectations with staff that just because they are eligible does not guarantee that they will be able to get an appointment or get vaccinated right away due to very limited supply of vaccines across the state.

In the meantime, school leaders can talk to their 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 employees in their [native languages](#), whenever possible, using clear language and trusted means of communication.

School leaders can attend a NC Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) Vaccine 101 presentation so that they can help direct employees to trusted sources of information. Please submit a request using [NCDHHS's form](#) if your school district or school is interested in helping to organize a vaccine 101 presentation led by NCDHHS presenters.

Consider taking the following steps to educate your employees about the COVID-19 vaccine:

- Send employee letters, text messages or email blasts (see [Appendix 2](#))
- Schedule meetings with team members to learn about the COVID-19 vaccine and how they can get vaccinated. (Consider offering meetings in other languages, as appropriate, based on employee population.)
- Display posters and other printed materials in places where staff spend the most time
- Post vaccine information on your organization's social media or worksite television monitors
- Partner with trusted community leaders to promote getting your vaccine when it's your turn
- Review and share CDC's COVID-19 Communication [Toolkit](#) for Essential Workers for additional resources and materials
- Visit the [CDC guidance](#) for non-healthcare critical infrastructure employers for more tips!

Resources to share with your employees about the COVID-19 vaccine:

- **Flyers and Fact Sheets:** Print and share flyers in your community.
 - [Bilingual - Your Best Shot Against COVID-19](#)
 - Simpler Flyer – [English](#) / [Spanish](#)
 - Postcard Size Handout – [English](#) / [Spanish](#)
- **Infographic:** Use on your website and digital displays.
 - North Carolina's Vaccine Groups – [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 your social media channels using our [Social Media Graphics](#)
- **FAQs:** Use to answer questions that staff may have about the vaccine. Our frequently asked questions are updated weekly.
 - FAQ - English – [English](#) / [Spanish](#) (updated weekly)
- **Presentation:** Become a Vaccine Ambassador by attending a Vaccine 101 presentation. [Register now](#). (Recommended for school administrators who want to be knowledgeable about COVID-19 vaccine facts.)
 - Vaccine 101 Deck – [English](#) / [Spanish](#)
- **Collect and Share Stories:** Share stories of people telling 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 our Vaccine websites.
 - YourSpotYourShot.nc.gov
 - Vacunate.nc.gov



Appendix 2.

Communications Tool: Template Email to Eligible School Employees

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

Dear <NAME>,

North Carolina will open vaccinations to school and child care employees starting Wednesday, February 24, 2021. **This means that school and child care staff will be ELIGIBLE to receive a vaccination on February 24. However, this DOES NOT guarantee that school and child care staff will be able to get an appointment or get vaccinated right away due to very limited vaccine supply.** Initially, some vaccine providers may be ready to vaccinate school and child care employees as early as February 24, while other vaccine providers may continue to focus on vaccinating Group 1 (health care workers and long term care facility staff/residents) and Group 2 (adults ages 65 and older) if they are still experiencing significant demand from these populations. On March 3rd, eligibility will further open to other frontline essential workers in Group 3. School and child care staff will continue to be eligible after March 3rd.

School and Child Care Staff are individuals working on-site to facilitate education or child care, including but not limited to: bus drivers, cafeteria workers, custodial staff, school nurses, teachers and teaching assistance, and administrators. In your current role at <EMPLOYER NAME>, we are reaching out to inform you that you qualify as School and Child Care Staff, making you eligible for vaccination. However, because vaccine supplies are very limited right now, there may be a wait to schedule your appointment to get your vaccine.

We strongly recommend that you get the vaccine when it is available to you. For your information, we have included some more information about the safety and effectiveness of the COVID-19 vaccinations that are currently available in the US:

- Scientists had a head start. The vaccines were built upon years of work to develop vaccines for similar viruses.
- The vaccines are tested, safe and effective. 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.
- You cannot get COVID-19 from the vaccine. You may have temporary reactions like a sore arm, headache, or feeling tired and achy for a day or two after receiving the vaccine.
- Take your shot at no cost. The COVID-19 vaccine is available for free, whether or not you have insurance.

Here are your next steps for getting vaccinated:

- Go to [NCDHHS Find a Vaccine Location](#), search by your zip code, and contact one of the local vaccine providers on the list; OR



NC DEPARTMENT OF
**HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES**

- Call the NC COVID-19 Vaccine Help Center (**1-877-490-6642**) to get help finding a vaccine provider near you

[Optional text to include if your school district is partnering with a vaccine provider on a vaccine event or reserved appointments, please insert all options that are available to your 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 your interest in being vaccinated against COVID-19, and we will help you get scheduled for an appointment.

Thank you for your consideration. Please contact <<insert contact person>> with questions or concerns.



Appendix 3.

Operations: Steps for School Leaders to Coordinate with Vaccine Providers

School leaders that are working with vaccine provider(s) in their area to implement models 1 or 2 (see Section 4) may be able to take the following additional steps. **Before taking any of these steps below, talk to your vaccine provider(s) about what this will look like in your community.**

Coordinate with Vaccine Providers	
<p>Notify employees of reserved appointments and help schedule when possible</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If your local vaccine provider is able to set aside appointments specifically for school employees, work with them to fill those slots by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Alerting employees of times/dates of appointments/events that are available to them and how they can sign up ○ Providing assistance for registration process or on-line scheduling (access to Wi-Fi, assistance with translation, email set-up) ○ Sending reminders to staff about upcoming vaccine events <p>NOTE: When helping to schedule appointments, consider that you may need to stagger employees on different days</p>
<p>Provide transportation for employees to vaccination events</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer employees transportation to and from vaccine sites • Share information about local transit authorities that can assist people needing transportation to a vaccination site <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ People who need transportation assistance to a COVID-19 vaccine should reach out to their local transit agency (a list of local transit agencies can be found at the NC DOT website).
<p>Organize vaccine event logistics</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with your local vaccine provider to determine whether a vaccine event for school staff is the right model for vaccinating your staff. If so, you can help identify a facility that has basic amenities or features, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Running water, electricity, heat/air conditioning ○ Toilet and handwashing facilities ○ Reliable cell phone service ○ Wireless internet (this is particularly important for vaccine providers to be able to register people in CVMS and do data entry) ○ Tables and chairs ○ Basic beverage and food provision for vaccinators and volunteers ○ Heavy-duty tents for shelter (if outdoor) ○ ADA accessibility • Consider using school facilities or spaces that are not currently being used for in-person instruction



	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consider partnering with organizations (e.g., faith organizations, community centers) that have available space for vaccine events
Support vaccination event staffing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Work with your local vaccine provider to determine whether a vaccine event is the right model for your staff. If so, you can support vaccine events for your employees (e.g., offering volunteers who can support check-in and check-out, parking/traffic control, & offering school nurses who can vaccinate).• Identify volunteers who can support with the following types of tasks at a vaccine event:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Scheduling vaccine appointments for your event○ Calling and confirming appointments○ Greeting, temperature checks, symptom screening○ Parking and traffic control○ Check-in table and confirmation of appointment○ Check-out and second dose scheduling, if receiving a two-dose vaccine○ Interpreters• <i>Please note: In most cases, vaccine providers (NOT community organizations) should plan to staff the following components of vaccine events: registration in CVMS, vaccine storage and handling, vaccine administration, post-vaccination monitoring, and data entry. Vaccine providers may also guide/support other activities as needed.</i>