



#Vax2SchoolCT

A Toolkit for Connecticut School Districts
DPH + CSDE

Introduction

The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) in partnership with the Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH) is excited to welcome all students, families, and staff back to a safe and healthy 2021-2022 school year!

As is reflected in the [Fall 2021 Interim Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention](#), COVID vaccines are the most effective tool available to keep schools open and safe. To this end, DPH and CSDE are working together to make on-site vaccination clinics available at every school with age-eligible students in Connecticut during the months of August, September, and October. This initiative is part of a broader national effort, being promoted by the White House: see [here](#).

We know that access to vaccines is most effectively provided when accompanied by thoughtful outreach, engagement and resources that leverage the trusted relationships that educators and school communities have. This toolkit serves to provide guidance in a number of these areas.

We encourage all districts to work closely with their local health departments, vaccine providers, and DPH to plan these clinics (click [HERE](#) for a live updated list of available vaccine providers). As a reminder, all providers who are enrolled in the COVID-19 Vaccine Program (CoVP) have the ability to order Pfizer vaccine in any quantity. Providers enrolled in CoVP can reach out to DPH with questions on obtaining Pfizer vaccine for your clinic. DPH also has the ability to easily deploy mobile vaccine clinics to support you if other local vaccinators are not available (*for more information about this program, see [here](#)*).

Districts and school leaders should start by reviewing this toolkit. Districts or each of your school leaders should complete the [School COVID Vaccine Clinic Plan Form](#) by Wednesday, August 18 to indicate how you plan to participate in this statewide effort. *Note: this is the form to request a DPH-facilitated Griffin Health mobile vaccine clinic.*

Contact DPH.Vax2School@ct.gov with questions.

How To Host a Clinic:

Logistics

- Connect with a vaccine provider.** Submit the [School COVID Vaccine Clinic Plan Form](#) to indicate your plan to work with your local health department or vaccine providers ([click HERE for a live updated list of available vaccine providers](#)) or to request a DPH mobile vaccine van. If requesting a DPH mobile vaccine van, please wait to receive confirmation from DPH. Ideally, you submit your request 3-4 weeks before your vaccine clinic.
- Select a space, prepare the site.** Here are some considerations and questions your vaccine provider may ask about.
 - Space: Indoor spaces are generally preferred. If outdoors, will the vaccinating area fit two 10 x 20 ft. tents? In the event of inclement weather, is an indoor space available? Are there any security/safety concerns to consider?
 - Resources: Will electrical power, Wi-Fi, bathroom access, chairs (12), tables (4), and tents (2 10 x 20 ft) be provided by the site?
- Distribute Consent Forms.** Distribute and post multilingual flyers and parent/guardian consent forms to all students. Plan the logistics to receive consent forms and/or allow families to be present at the time of vaccination.
 - All students ages 12-17 may present a signed parent/guardian consent form, and don't need a family member present.
 - If your school district creates or maintains any records containing students' personally identifiable information associated with its vaccination efforts, those records will constitute education records under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). As such, your school district must comply with all applicable provisions of FERPA when maintaining and potentially disclosing information from those records.
 - Griffin Hospital consent forms (Patient Acknowledgement and Attestation Form for COVID-19 Vaccination) are available [HERE](#). Note: Griffin Hospital collects insurance information from participants when available; there is no cost to the recipients (regardless of insurance).

How to Host a Clinic:

Promotion and Outreach

1) Campaign Messages for Students and Families:

- We recommend using fact-based messages that are generated by and resonate with stakeholders in your community. Connect with student groups, family organizations, and your local health departments to think through what campaign messages will work for your school community!
- **Key Messages from the CDC:**
 - Vaccines are safe and effective at preventing COVID-19 disease, especially severe illness, hospitalizations, and death. Vaccines reduce the risk of people spreading the virus that causes COVID-19.
 - Over 163,000,000 people have been fully vaccinated in the United States.
 - You may have side effects after vaccination. These are normal and should go away in a few days. It typically takes 2 weeks after vaccination for the body to build protection (immunity) against the virus that causes COVID-19. You are not fully vaccinated until 2 weeks after the second dose of a 2-dose vaccine or 2 weeks after a single-dose vaccine.
 - After you are fully vaccinated, you can resume activities that you did before the pandemic.
 - The vaccine is free of charge, regardless of immigration or health insurance status.
- We've learned that focused messages on personal responsibility, dedication to family, reliance on science, keeping schools open and running normally, and care for community have worked for some schools. Again, we recommend using messages that are generated by and resonate with stakeholders in your community.

2) Education and Engagement Strategies for Students and Families:

- Teach (and learn)!** COVID vaccines are currently available for individuals 12 and older, however, there are relevant resources that feature COVID vaccines for younger ages as well:
 - OpenSciEd: [COVID-19 Science Units - Health Equity Lessons](#)
 - ShapeAmerica: [Coronavirus Resources for Physical Education and Health](#)
 - Scholastic: [Teaching Our World: The Coronavirus](#)
- Organize a COVID vaccine education event for families.** We highly recommend working with local, trusted medical professionals and community leaders to discuss the science and significance of vaccines. If you need help identifying a trusted messenger presenter, contact carter@ethicalinfluencect.com.
- Host a school-wide Vaccination Celebration,** before or on the day of your clinic. This can be a health-oriented field day (ex. team-building sports, outdoor activities), could be sponsored by a student club (student government, equity/justice club) or school or family organization (ex. PTA/PTO), and can include vaccination education for students/families/community. Students already vaccinated could write letters of encouragement and confidence to their peers.
- Use available ESSER funding for vaccine-related campaign/promotion activities.** Eligible examples include campaign materials/printing, physical education/sports equipment, healthy foods/snacks, campaign microgrants for trusted community stakeholders (ex. Student clubs, family organizations), student-friendly incentives (ex. [stickers](#), [temporary tattoos](#), school spirit gear, etc), and more! COVID-related incentives should be reasonable in size and scope and likely to lead to an increase in the rate of vaccinations.

3) Best Practices for Comprehensive Outreach

- Work in partnership** with local health departments, district health leads, and school-based health professionals to strategize around outreach, especially to connect with typically overburdened and underserved students and families of your community.
- Communicate early and often.** Distribute and post multilingual flyers and parent/guardian consent forms to all students (ex. 1 week and 1 day before the clinic). Plan the logistics to receive consent forms and/or allow families to be present at the time of vaccination. **Flyers, social media templates, and consent forms (Patient Acknowledgement and Attestation Form for COVID-19 Vaccination) are available [HERE](#). A sample letter for parents and students is available in the appendix.**
- Post on social media**, tagging @ctdph and @getvaccinatedct, including with the hashtags #Vax2SchoolCT and #GetVaccinatedCT
- Leverage all communication channels** including email/text/robocall all families and students.
- Provide print materials** (ex. Flyers, educational information) at all school sites in the main office
- Request other trusted community stakeholders/influencers** (ex. education and health advocacy organizations, city government departments, faith-based organizations, local businesses) to share flyer and post on social media.
- Submit press release** to local press (ex. TV, print, radio, etc).
- Download the [Outreach Kit](#) for communication templates.** Downloadable copy of materials available here: [Google Drive](#). Non-English languages available here: [Zip folder](#) (Includes Spanish, Arabic, Polish, Haitian Creole, Simplified and Traditional Chinese, and 8 other languages.)

Connecticut Vaccine Program

The COVID vaccine is one of many immunizations that our students need to participate safely in school ([Connecticut Vaccine Program](#), list of required immunizations [HERE](#)). Please encourage families to check-in regularly with their healthcare provider, to ensure their children are up-to-date with preventable healthcare, protecting themselves and their school community. “Vaccines are one of the greatest public health tools we have at keeping people healthy,” said Acting Commissioner Deidre Gifford. “All children should be able to attend school in an environment free of vaccine-preventable diseases”.

Questions? Contact dph.immunizations@ct.gov, 860-509-7929.

Supportive Resources

- **COVID-Related Resources for Schools:**
 - OpenSciEd: [COVID-19 Science Units - Health Equity Lessons](#)
 - ShapeAmerica: [Coronavirus Resources for Physical Education and Health](#)
 - Scholastic: [Teaching Our World: The Coronavirus](#)
- **[U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, We Can Do This Back to School Toolkit:](#)** Resources to help increase confidence, answer questions, and outline school guidance.
- **[Vaxteen:](#)** Communicates directly with teenagers to counter the dangerous tide of misinformation, encouraging teens to find out what immunizations they need and how they can get them.
- **[Made to Save:](#)** Vaccines were made to save us. Made to Save is a national education and grassroots campaign working to save lives by increasing access to the COVID-19 vaccines.
- **[CDC, COVID-19 Vaccines for Children and Teens:](#)** CDC recommends everyone 12 years and older should get a COVID-19 vaccination to help protect against COVID-19.
- **[White House: COVID-19 College Vaccination Challenge:](#)** Colleges commit to taking key actions: engaging every community member; organizing the college campus; and delivering vaccine access.
- **[Common Sense Education:](#)** Browse their K-12 content concerning supporting students in recognizing and combating misinformation.

If there are other resources you've identified that have been instrumental to your vaccination efforts, share them with us, so we can share them (DPH.Vax2School@ct.gov).

Appendix: Sample letter to students and families

This sample letter is provided as an example - it can be tailored to your specific context. It is recommended that outreach begin at least 3 weeks before the clinic is held.

Dear [SCHOOL NAME] Students & Families,

We are excited to announce that on [DATE], we will be hosting a COVID 19 vaccine clinic at [SCHOOL LOCATION].

COVID 19 vaccines are a powerful way for us to make sure that our school community is protected from COVID 19 and that we are able to have a smooth and uninterrupted school year. We encourage all students and families who have not yet been vaccinated to take this opportunity to access a COVID 19 vaccine.

COVID vaccines are available for all students 12 years of age and older. Roughly 7 million teens across the United States have been vaccinated so far, and the vaccine has proven to be both safe and effective.

We encourage all students and families who want to learn more about COVID vaccines to do so. The CDC has several resources that students and families may find useful:

- For an overview of common myths and facts about COVID vaccines, [click here](#)
- For an overview of COVID 19 vaccines for children, including information about the Pfizer vaccine product, [click here](#)
- To read an interview about COVID 19 vaccines with a Connecticut-based pediatrician who is also the President-Elect for the Connecticut chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, [click here](#)

In addition, we encourage families with additional questions to consult with their pediatricians.

All students who want to get vaccinated at [SCHOOL's] clinic on [DATE] are encouraged to do so. Students will need to [DESCRIBE CONSENT PROCESS - INFORMATION TO BE PROVIDED BY VACCINATOR].

Please reach out to [CONTACT NAME] with any questions - and thank you for everything you are doing to keep yourselves, your family, and your community safe.