



# #Vax2SchoolCT

A Toolkit for Connecticut School Districts  
DPH + CSDE (Updated January 2022)

## Introduction

On behalf of the Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH) and the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE), we thank you for all you have done to keep students, families, and staff safe and healthy in the 2021-2022 school year!

On November [2nd], the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine was approved for children ages 5-11. This approval marked a major milestone in our ongoing efforts to ensure that schools remain open and safe.

As in the vaccination roll-out for students ages 12-and-older, DPH and CSDE are working together to make on-site vaccination clinics available at every school with age-eligible students in the coming months. You will be able to:

- Utilize your school-based health center for vaccinations,
- Work with your local health department,
- Work with a vaccine provider with whom you have a relationship, or
- Request support from DPH through a mobile van for your school-based vaccination clinic

If you have not done so already, **please complete the [School COVID Vaccine Clinic Plan Form](#)**

Before planning your clinic, we encourage you to review the materials in this updated #Vax2SchoolToolkit, which contains the up-to-date guidance on hosting vaccination clinics for students ages 5-11, including promotion and outreach messages, education strategies, and a sample letter to students and families.

As you know, Connecticut has been a national leader in vaccination, which has allowed us to keep our school communities safe and reduce the burden of COVID-19 illness in our community. We are asking for your help in ensuring that we continue to be a leader as we make the COVID-19 vaccine available to younger children.

If any questions, do not hesitate to reach out to [DPH.Vax2School@ct.gov](mailto:DPH.Vax2School@ct.gov).

## How To Host a Clinic:

### Logistics

- **Connect with a vaccine provider.** Submit the [School COVID-19 Vaccine Clinic Plan Form \(Ages 5-11\)](#) to indicate your plan to work with your local health department or a vaccine provider or to request a DPH mobile vaccine van. Please note that, if your school has a school-based health center, your primary channel for vaccinating students should be your school-based health center. If you need supplemental support, you are welcome to request a DPH mobile van. If requesting van, please wait to receive confirmation from DPH. We recommend submitting your request several 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 required if partnering with DPH for a mobile vaccination van clinic. 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?
- **Create a plan for consent process:** You will discuss the consent process that is right for your school with your vaccine provider. Most vaccine providers will recommend but not require that a parent or a responsible adult accompany children 5-11 to their COVID-19 vaccines. In cases that a parent or responsible adult cannot accompany a child, you can decide to accept a signed consent form. In this case:
  - Distribute and post multilingual flyers and parent/guardian [consent forms](#) to all students. Plan the logistics to receive consent forms in advance of the clinic.
  - Note: 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.

## How to Host a Clinic: Promotion and Outreach

### 1) Campaign Messages for 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:](#)
  - COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective at preventing COVID-19 illness and transmission in kids 5-11. The vaccine keeps kids safe, and it keeps their loved ones safe, too
  - Kids may experience 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. Kids are not fully vaccinated until 2 weeks after the second dose of a 2-dose vaccine.
  - After kids are fully vaccinated, they can resume activities they did before the pandemic
  - The vaccine is free of charge, regardless of immigration or health insurance status.
- A key message that you can share is that COVID-19 vaccines help keep schools open. In Connecticut, students do not have to quarantine or isolate from school or sports after a COVID-19 exposure if they are fully vaccinated
- We've learned that focused messages on care for community, keeping schools and activities open and running normally, and reliance on science 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 5 and older. Resources will soon be widely available that are geared towards parents and kids to share age-appropriate information about the COVID vaccine. Here are a few resources to get you started:
  - Scholastic: [Teaching Our World: The Coronavirus](#)
  - ShapeAmerica: [Coronavirus Resources for Physical Education and Health](#)
  - CDC: [How to Talk with Parents about COVID-19 Vaccination](#)
- **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 with families.
- **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 school or family organization (ex. PTA/PTO), and can include vaccination education for students/families/community. Older students already vaccinated could write letters of encouragement and confidence to their younger 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 families of your community.
- **Communicate with families 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) and ensure that parents/guardians understand whether they will be required to attend the vaccination clinic in person. **Downloadable flyers and social media templates 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 to all families.
- **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.** These materials were developed for the kids 12+ roll-out. Feel free to use these materials and adjust them as relevant for kids ages 5-11. 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. ““The data is clear – the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine is safe and effective for children ages 5 through 11,” Commissioner Juthani said. “I encourage parents and families to protect their children and themselves.”” . **Questions?** Contact [dph.immunizations@ct.gov](mailto:dph.immunizations@ct.gov), 860-509-7929.

## Vaccine+ Program

In addition to offering COVID-19 vaccines, families will have the opportunity to sign up to be contacted by their local Community Action Agency (CAA) with information on how to apply for available resources such as water and heating assistance. Specifically, the residents complete a 2-3 minute online intake form which results in a call from a CAA within 2-3 days. The CAA representative will assess the qualifications for services and connect the resident to appropriate resources.

## Supportive Resources

- **COVID-Related Resources for Schools (incl. resources for students 5-11 and 12+):**
  - Scholastic: [Teaching Our World: The Coronavirus](#)
  - OpenSciEd: [COVID-19 Science Units - Health Equity Lessons](#)
  - ShapeAmerica: [Coronavirus Resources for Physical Education and Health](#)
- **[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 recommendation for kids and teens about getting a COVID-19 vaccination to help protect against COVID-19.
- **[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](mailto: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] for students ages 5-11.

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 continue 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.

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, [click here](#)

In addition, we encourage families consult with their pediatricians, who can share information and support for patients and their families.

Finally, students and families who are unable to get vaccinated at our COVID-19 vaccine clinic should not worry: there are hundreds of locations across the State of Connecticut where your child can receive the COVID-19 vaccine. These include pediatric offices, pharmacies, local health departments, hospitals, and health systems. You can visit [ct.gov/covidvaccine](http://ct.gov/covidvaccine), type in our zip code, and see what providers locally are offering COVID-19 vaccines for children 5-11.

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.