StrongSchoolsNC

Vaccine Operational Guidance for Schools

1. Background

This operational guidance includes recommendations intended to help school leaders support their eligible students and employees in getting vaccinated. COVID-19 vaccines are a safe and effective tool that will help stop the pandemic. Vaccines are now widely accessible and are recommended for anyone ages 12 and older. Getting a COVID-19 vaccine can help protect adults, children, and teens from getting COVID-19 and spreading the virus to others. To learn more visit the CDC's website on Teachers, School Staff & Childcare Workers and COVID-19 Vaccines for Children and Teens.

Who is eligible? Students ages 12 and over are eligible to receive a vaccine. People cannot get COVID-19 from any COVID-19 vaccine, however some individuals may have some temporary side effects after getting the vaccine. Although most COVID-19 cases are from adults, children can be infected and become sick with the virus that causes COVID-19. If infected they can also spread this virus to others. Vaccination helps protect the person who receives the vaccine and others in the community. Currently the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine is the only vaccine available to children ages 12 and older.

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

Eligible students and employees can get vaccinated by any provider in North Carolina enrolled in the COVID-19 Vaccination Program. Currently, vaccinations are available for free in every county and provided by:

- Most hospitals and health systems
- Many federally qualified health centers and community health centers
- All local health departments
- Many pharmacies
- Some primary care providers (i.e., doctor's offices)

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

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

There are several ways that school leaders can help their students and employees get vaccinated. 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 individual school or school district leadership to reach out to a vaccine provider in their area.

Example Vaccine Models for Students and School Employees

Example 1: Vaccine Event On-Site at School Facility	Example 2: Vaccine Provider Hosts Special Vaccine Event for School	Example 3: Support Getting Vaccinated Independently
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.	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.	Share information and encourage vaccination to facilitate student families seeking vaccination on their own at any vaccine provider.

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.

The following are roles that school leaders could play in supporting their students and employees to get vaccinated, depending on which model their local vaccine provider is able to implement.

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Key School Roles		Example 1: Vaccine Event On-Site at School Facility	Example 2: Vaccine Provider Hosts Special Vaccine Event for School	Example 3: Support People Getting Vaccinated Independently
Initiate Outreach				
	Notify students about their eligibility and encourage them to get vaccinated (See Appendix 1 for resources)	☑	☑	☑
	Share general information about how and where people can get vaccinated (See Appendix 2 for a letter template)	☑	☑	☑
Coordinate with local vaccine provider to… (see Appendix 3)				
	Notify employees and student families of reserved appointments and help schedule when possible	☑	☑	
	Provide transportation for employees and students to vaccination events consistent with policy	☑	☑	
	Support vaccination event staffing	☑	☑	
	Organize vaccine event logistics	☑		
	Offer student vaccinations at pre-participation physical evaluations/exams required for sports or camps			☑
	Develop a school-based vaccination clinic			☑

4. Roles and responsibilities

School Administrators (Superintendents, School Principals, etc.)

- Initiate outreach steps (see details in Appendix 1 Appendix 2 Appendix 4)
  o Share general information with parents, students, and staff about where and how people can get vaccinated.
- Larger districts may wish to consider reaching out to multiple vaccine providers given their larger number of students (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 becoming 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 district leaders and private/charter school leaders incentivize their students and employees to become vaccinated?**

Example 1: Vaccinations at Annual Well Visits and Sports Physicals	Example 2: Prize Drawings	Example 3: School Supply Drives
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.	School districts can support vaccinations by creating a drawing for all vaccinated students. Prize packages could compose of school supplies, gift cards, and additional recourses that may be useful to the student or employee. Help promote NCDHHS's Summer Cash and Summer Cash 4 School Drawings and the chance to win a million dollars or a full college scholarship. Learn more at NCDHHS's website.	School districts can offer vaccination as part of back-to-school event with live music, food trucks, and /or giveaways like school supplies or popsicles.

Appendix 1.

Communications Steps: Notify School Staff, Students, and Parents About Their Eligibility for Vaccination and Encourage Them to Get Vaccinated

School leaders can 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.

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, which can take place in English or Spanish.

Consider taking the following steps to educate 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 CDC's COVID-19 Vaccines for Children and Teens.
- 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 people about the COVID-19 vaccine:

- **Flyers and Fact Sheets**: Print and share flyers in your community.
  - o Bilingual - Your Best Shot Against COVID-19
  - o Simpler Flyer – English / Spanish
  - o Postcard Size Handout – English / Spanish

- **Videos:** Post on social media, play on internal displays, and share on websites and in newsletters.

  - o 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 NC DHHS Social Media Graphics
- **FAQs:** Use to answer questions that staff may have about the vaccine. NC DHHS frequently asked questions are updated weekly. See Appendix 4.
  - o 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 NC DHHS Vaccine websites.
    - YourSpotYourShot.nc.gov
    - Vacunate.nc.gov

Appendix 2.

Communications Tool: Template Email to Eligible Students and School Employees
School leaders can customize this template email and share with student families or employees.

Dear <mark>\<NAME\></mark>,

It is strongly recommended that you get the COVID-19 vaccine if you are eligible. We have included some more information about the safety and effectiveness about the 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 were able to be 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 after they are in 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 NCDHHS Find a 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

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

Thank you for your consideration. Please contact <mark>\<\<insert contact person\>\></mark> 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 vaccine provider(s) about what this may look like in each community.**

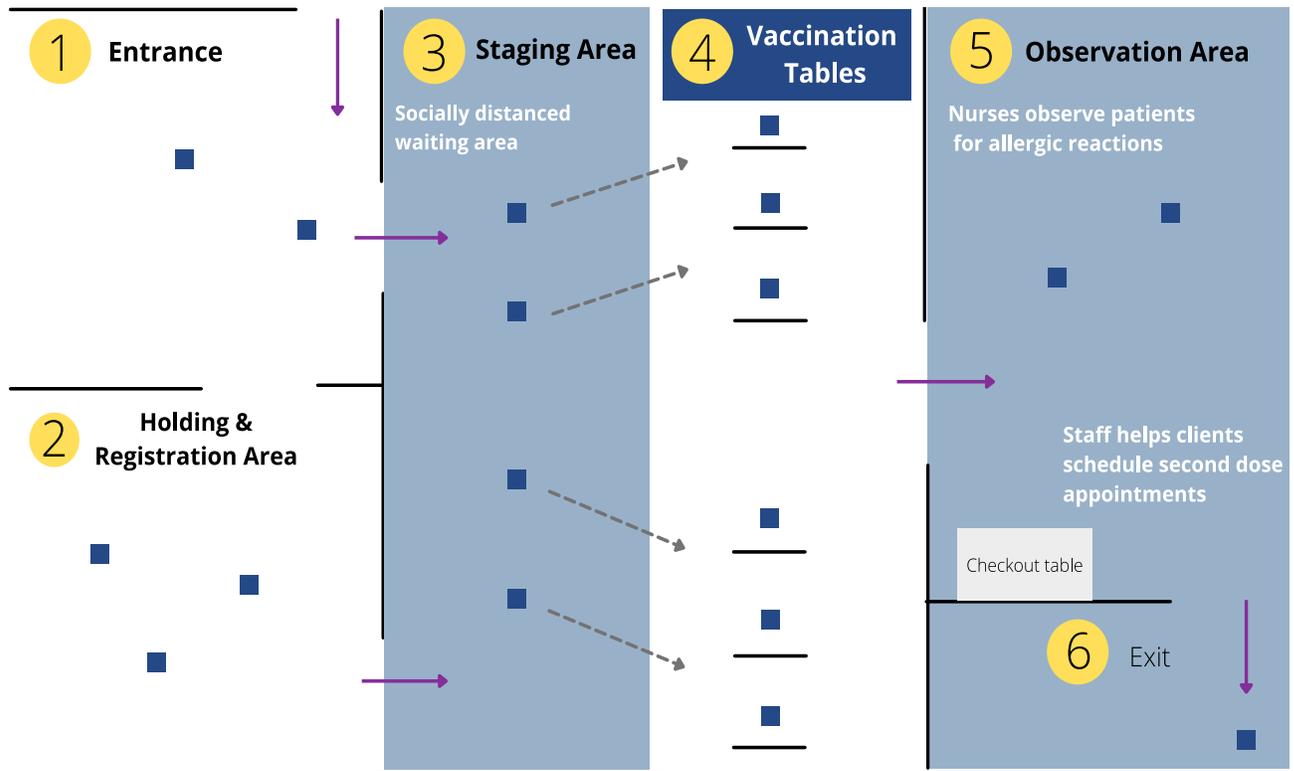| Coordinate with Vaccine Providers	
Notify students and employees of reserved appointments and help schedule when possible	• While many providers are offering walk-in vaccinations, you may work witha local vaccine provider to assign a block of time specifically for students or school employees to create urgency and a sense of belonging, Work with them to fill those slots by: 　○ Alerting students and 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 NOTE: When helping to schedule appointments, consider that school districts or schools may need to stagger employees on different days
Provide transportation for employees and students to vaccination events	• Offer transportation to and from vaccine sites consistent with local policy. Some drive-thru vaccination sites may be able to accommodate school buses. • Share information about local transit authorities that can assist people needing transportation to a vaccination site 　○ 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).

Organize vaccine event logistics	• Work with a local vaccine provider to determine whether a vaccine event for school staff or eligible students is the right model. If so, it may help to identify a facility that has basic amenities or features, such as:
	    o Running water, electricity, heat/air conditioning
	    o Toilet and handwashing facilities
	    o Reliable cell phone service
	    o Wireless internet (this is particularly important for vaccine providers to be able to do data entry)
	    o Tables and chairs
	    o Basic beverage and food provision for vaccinators and volunteers
	    o Heavy-duty tents for shelter (if outdoor)
	    o ADA accessibility
	• Consider using school facilities or spaces that are not currently being used for in-person instruction
	• Consider offering entertainment, inviting food trucks, or providing giveaways to keep the environment festive.

	• Consider partnering with organizations (e.g., faith organizations, community centers) that have available space for vaccine events

Support vaccination event staffing	• Work with a local vaccine provider to determine whether a vaccine event is the right model for staff. If so, school districts or schools can support vaccine events for 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:
	    o Scheduling vaccine appointments for your event
	    o Calling and confirming appointments
	    o Greeting (multilingual volunteers preferred)
	    o Parking and traffic control
	    o Check-in table Check-out and second dose scheduling
	    o Interpreters
	• Publicize the event among faith-based groups, nonprofits, businesses, and other community-based organizations to represent the diversity of the community.
	• *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.*

Offer vaccinations at annual well visits and other visits such as pre-participation physical evaluations required for sports or camps	• 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. o *Please note:* Currently the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine is the only option available to children 12 years and older. • Develop a system to schedule follow-up appointments for students who receive their first dose of the vaccine at their well visit or pre-participation physical evaluation. • Include a note about vaccinations when sending out any reminders for required well-visits or physical evaluations.
Develop a school-based vaccination clinic	• Work with the local health department or other COVID-19 vaccine provider to offer the COVID-19 vaccine at a school, mobile unit, or well-known landmark. • Establish a walk-in clinic for students, employees, and other interested community members. *Please note:* Currently the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine is the only option available to children 12 years and older. • Develop a system to schedule follow-up appointments for individuals who receive their first dose of the vaccine through the school. • Assign sufficient staff and volunteers to run the clinic. • Consider inviting parents and other family members to get vaccinated alongside their student or staff member.

School-Based Vaccination Clinic Example:

Appendix 4.
FAQ for School Administrators and Parents

Are children able to get the vaccine?

The Pfizer vaccine can be given to teenagers aged 12 and up. Children below the age of 12 are not yet eligible to receive the vaccines as the FDA has not authorized their use in that age group. However, clinical trials are underway to ensure the vaccines are safe and work to prevent COVID-19 illness in younger children. Updates on each of those clinical trials are below: On May 10, 2021, the Pfizer vaccine was authorized by the FDA for children 12 to 15 years old based on results from a clinical trial that included 2,260 children aged 12 to 15 that showed very high levels of effectiveness. Everyone ages 12 and older can receive a free Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine, even if they don't have insurance and regardless of their immigration status. Pfizer is now conducting a clinical trial in children down to age 6 months.

Moderna, whose vaccine is currently only approved for people 18 and older, began clinical trials in adolescents in December 2020.In JuneModerna requested authorization from the Food and Drug Administration to include individuals ages 12 to 17. Moderna reported that none of the adolescents in the trial got sick with COVID-19 after being fully vaccinated, and there were no significant safety concerns. On March 17th, 2021, they also began clinical trials in children from ages 6 months to 11 years old. Johnson & Johnson, whose vaccine is also only approved for people 18 and older, is currently conducting a clinical trial in adolescents ages 12 to 17.

Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0dyIlTpMAmU

Why should I get my teenager vaccinated?

There is good news for helping our children get back to the fuller lives they had before the pandemic. The tested, safe and effective Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine is now available for ages 12 and up. This comes at just the right time to help us bring summer back for North Carolina's teenagers and ensure our kids are safely back in school next year. But that will only be possible if the large majority of North Carolinians are vaccinated. Young people are vulnerable to the virus, just like everyone else. Getting them vaccinated is the best way to protect them, prevent the spread of COVID-19, and protect others. In North Carolina, more than 100,000 children 0 to 17 years old have tested positive for COVID-19 and the percent of COVID-19 cases in children 17 and under has been increasing. Everyone ages 12 and older can receive a free Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine, even if they don't have insurance and regardless of their immigration status. Millions of people have already received thisvaccine. It is safe and effective in stopping the spread of COVID-19 and preventing serious illness, hospitalization and death.

Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o_5ld6bEqpo

Is the vaccine safe for teenagers?

Millions of adolescents and tens of millions of adults in the United States have received COVID-19 vaccines under the most intense safety monitoring in U.S. history. Adolescents, like adults, may have some temporary reactions, such as a sore arm, feeling tired or achy for a day or two, headache or fever. These are normal and good signs that their body is building protection, and they should go away in a few days. Parents/caregivers can enroll their adolescent in **v-safe**, a free, smartphone-based tool that uses text messaging and web surveys to provide personalized health check-ins. Through v-safe, you can report any side effects your teenager may have after vaccination. There have been no safety data to suggest that the COVID-19 vaccines impact teens' development or their ability to get pregnant in the future. Teens can get other vaccines at the same time, or around the same time, as the COVID-19 vaccine. The NC Pediatric Society, along with The North Carolina Medical Society (NCMS) and the North Carolina Academy of Family Physicians, strongly encourage all families to ensure adolescents ages 12 and older are vaccinated as soon as possible against COVID-19. Read more from these organizations **here**.

Can people under the age of 18 get a COVID-19 vaccine without parental consent?

A new state law requires that a parent or legal guardian provide written consent for anyone under 18 to receive a vaccine that has emergency use authorization from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Once a vaccine is fully approved by the FDA written consent is no longer required, however it is expected that for most teens, information about vaccination with parents and guardians and parental/guardian consent will be obtained for COVID-19 vaccination. North Carolina law also gives people under the age of 18 the ability to make certain health decisions, including the choice to get a COVID-19 vaccine, if they show the decisional capacity to do so. Decisional capacity is a person's ability to understand their health and health care needs and options, and to make decisions about them. As part of normal development most children are able to make these kinds of decisions like an adult at some point before the age of 18. There is no one age at which this always occurs; it varies from child to child.

On Aug. 23, 2021, the FDA approved the Pfizer vaccine (now marketed as Comirnaty) for anyone 16 and older. Therefore, written consent from parent or a legal guardian is required for teens ages 12 to 15 year. Approval for this age group is expected at a later date as Pfizer was authorized for teens ages 12 to 15 years, six months after it was authorized for people 16 and older.