



Illinois State Board of Education

100 North First Street • Springfield, Illinois 62777-0001
www.isbe.net

Darren Reisberg
Chair of the Board

Dr. Carmen I. Ayala
State Superintendent of Education

May 14, 2021

Dear Parents:

Many students and families are anxiously awaiting the summer ahead after a year filled with new challenges and uncertainties. While COVID-19 has brought about changes, the crucial role vaccinations play in keeping children, their classmates, and communities safe remains unchanged. Since the start of the pandemic, over 200,000 children in Illinois have been infected with COVID-19. We hope that the months ahead will be healthy ones, free of vaccine-preventable disease.

Schools with lower rates of vaccination are more likely to see outbreaks which can lead to time away from school in addition to more serious consequences for the health of children and families. [The American Academy of Pediatrics](#) has strongly expressed their support for approved COVID-19 vaccines in younger children and adolescents as “key, safe mechanisms that protect individuals and populations against many infectious diseases”.

As of May 12, 2021, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration has granted emergency use authorization for the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine to be used in children ages 12-15, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends this vaccine for all youth 12 years and older. CDC’s recommendation comes after a strong endorsement from their independent Advisory Council on Immunization Practices. We are providing a list of resources below on vaccine availability, safety, and other common questions.

Where can my child receive a vaccine?

- **School:** Many schools will be offering free school-based vaccination events. We encourage all unvaccinated students and their family members to take advantage of these events if you receive a letter from your child’s school informing you there will be one available near you.
- **Hospital or Primary Care Provider:** Many Illinois hospitals, primary care providers, and pediatrician offices are providing COVID-19 vaccines. You can reach out to your child’s primary care provider to see if they have appointments available.
- **Pharmacies:** There are over 1,000 pharmacies across the state administering COVID-19 vaccine. Families can search [Vaccines.gov](#) by the “Pfizer” filter to identify area pharmacies with available appointments providing vaccines approved for young people.
- **Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs):** FQHCs are community-based care providers that provide primary care services in underserved areas. You can [contact your local FQHC](#) to see if they have available appointments for your child. Services are offered on a sliding payment scale.
- **Local Health Department (LHD):** Your Local Health Department may host a vaccination event specifically for students and families. Check your Health Department’s website for updates.

Where can I learn more about the COVID-19 Vaccine?

- [The Science Behind COVID-19: Parent FAQs](#) (American Academy of Pediatrics)
- [Key Things to Know About COVID-19 Vaccines](#) (Center for Disease Control)
- Illinois’ [Coronavirus website](#), which includes a [comprehensive list of state vaccine locations](#).

We appreciate you doing your part to keep schools and communities safe.