

November 5, 2021

To: DCS Staff and Caregivers**Re: COVID-19 Coronavirus – Youth Vaccinations for children aged 16+ vs. age 5-15**

For children aged 16+

The Pfizer BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine is approved for use in patients aged 16+. The Pfizer vaccine will also be known as “Comirnaty (koe-mir’-na-tee).” This approval means that for people aged 16+, Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) no longer applies.

For youth in care aged 16+ **that choose to be vaccinated**, the standard DCS Program Policy for immunization applies. Standard policy indicates that if possible, parental consent should be sought, and unless objected to for religious reasons or medically contraindicated, vaccination can proceed. The immunization policy is available for review here: [Chapter 3 Section 7.1 Medical Services for Children in Out-of-Home Care](#).

For children aged 5-15

The Pfizer BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine is FDA approved for EMERGENCY use in patients aged 5-15. (Previously 12-15, the age range for emergency use was expanded this week to include youth aged 5-11.) Because it is an emergency use approval, the guidance below should still be followed for youth aged 5-15 until further notice.

The FDA granted Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) for the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine for youth 5-15.

The Department understands there are varying opinions regarding the vaccine, but the most valued opinion in this case belongs with the youth themselves. Please engage all youth 5+ and their treating physician to discuss whether they want the vaccine or not. For those wishing to have the vaccine, please use the following guidance:

Parental Consent

- Parents must agree for the youth to receive vaccination, when eligible per the local county distribution plan.

Court Ordered

- If a parent objects to vaccination, and the child requests it or a doctor recommends it, the Department shall file a motion with the Juvenile Court.

- In the event the youth is legally free, and with the youth's consent, the youth's GAL shall file a motion with the Juvenile Court.

Treating Physician recommendation

- Youth in care may be recommended for vaccination by their treating physician. The Department agrees that any eligible youth in this scenario can be vaccinated, either by Parental Consent or Court Order

Congregate Care settings

- The Department agrees that any child/youth in congregate care can be vaccinated with parental consent.
- Congregate care facilities include Group Homes, Shelters, Behavioral Health Residential Facilities, Behavioral Health Inpatient Facilities, County Detention Facilities and State Correctional Facilities
- Caregivers may not require youth be vaccinated to remain in the home.

Family-like settings

- Caregivers may not require youth be vaccinated to remain in the home. If a 5+ youth does not wish to have the vaccine and there are caregiver concerns, please reach out to the DCS Specialist to discuss alternatives that can meet the needs of the family.

There will be scenarios not contemplated above. In those situations, the Department will review, provide guidance and then update communication accordingly. As new vaccinations are approved or Emergency Use Authorization is expanded, the Department will provide additional communication.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mike Faust", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Mike Faust
Director

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