

January 21, 2021

Re: Vaccination of Children in Care aged 16+

Dear Caregivers,

The Department remains committed to providing timely and accurate guidance regarding mitigation of COVID-19 spread.

As of 1/15/2021 the FDA has granted Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) for two COVID-19 vaccinations. The Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine is the only vaccine approved for youth 16 and older.

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 16+ 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 may consent 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
  - Given the nature of this caregiver option, the Department agrees that any youth in this setting who wants to be vaccinated can be vaccinated.
  - 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 16+ 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.

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Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Michael Faust". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

Mike Faust  
Director

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