Template Joint Communication from AAP/AAFP Chapters to Members

Re: Renewing efforts to protect children from COVID-19

Date

Dear members,

Representatives from the [state] chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics [X-AAP] and American Academy of Family Physicians [X-AAFP] recently met with key partners to discuss the importance of protecting our children from COVID-19 disease. Our children, especially those under age 5, continue to be left vulnerable to a disease we still do not fully understand. Vaccinating them is the best protection we can offer. While COVID-19 is typically mild in children, children ages 0-4 are still [hospitalized](https://gis.cdc.gov/grasp/COVIDNet/COVID19_5.html) with COVID-19 related illness more often than any other pediatric age group. As of June 28, 2023, 776 children ages 0-4 years and 1,071 children ages 5-18 years have died from COVID-19 in the United States. These deaths are largely preventable if we vaccinate.

In our state, [X] babies become newly eligible for COVID-19 vaccine every day, yet many of us fail to make the strong recommendation to parents that they protect their child. The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/planning/children.html#:~:text=For%20the%20best%20protection%2C%20CDC,everyone%206%20months%20and%20older.) (CDC), the [Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices](https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/71/wr/mm7126e2.htm) (ACIP), [AAP](https://www.aap.org/en/pages/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-infections/covid-19-vaccine-for-children/covid-19-vaccine-implementation-in-pediatric-practices/#:~:text=All%20children%20ages%206%20months,Reference%20Guide%20for%20more%20information.), and the [AAFP](https://www.aafp.org/family-physician/patient-care/current-hot-topics/recent-outbreaks/covid-19/covid-19-vaccine/children-and-adolescents.html#:~:text=The%20CDC%20has%20endorsed%20the,receive%20a%20COVID%2D19%20vaccine.) have made the recommendation that all eligible children ages 6 months and older be given COVID-19 vaccine. Leaving children unprotected keeps them vulnerable to infection and contributes to community spread of disease.

This fall will be busy for all of us—influenza, COVID-19, and RSV will once again impact our practices, our hospitals, and the lives of our patients. We should do everything we can to protect children from diseases we can prevent.

**The federal government has** [**stated**](https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/downloads/HHS-Commercialization-Transition-Guide-508.pdf) **that, as of August 3, 2023, at 4 pm ET, state immunization programs will no longer be able to place regular orders for COVID-19 vaccines.** **If your practice is not currently administering COVID-19 vaccines to the children you care for, now is the time to get that process in place while the vaccine is still provided at no cost.** Guidelines for administration are now easier than ever and **these vaccines should be incorporated into your existing well-child vaccination protocols**. AAP has a [quick reference guide](https://downloads.aap.org/AAP/PDF/COVID%20Vaccine%20Dosing_Quick%20Reference.pdf?_ga=2.32482366.1602857215.1684946501-176872956.1678026747) that puts all of the information in one place.

Beginning sometime in mid to late September, the new XBB.1.5 monovalent vaccine will be made available for all ages through the commercial market and currently available vaccines will be discontinued. **Many children need a COVID-19 vaccine prior to the anticipated release of the XBB.1.5 vaccine in the fall and it is important that we provide access**. Additionally, now is a great time to have a conversation with parents, especially those with young children, about the importance of vaccinating their child.

COVID-19 vaccines have been [proven safe](https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapediatrics/fullarticle/2805184) for children. Your strong recommendation to parents that they vaccinate their child is critical to vaccine acceptance and to protecting our children from repeated episodes of COVID-19 and their potential long-term consequences. Surveys have shown that doctors and their staff are seen as trustworthy messengers when it comes to vaccine education. We encourage you to use your voice as a medical expert to advocate for pediatric COVID-19 vaccinations to parents.

For more information on the importance of [vaccinating children](https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/planning/children.html) against COVID-19 and building [vaccine confidence](https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/vaccinate-with-confidence.html), please see [enter your chapter websites or other resource].

Thank you for all you do for the [state’s] children!

Sincerely,

[X AAP Chapter President} {X AAFP Chapter President}