



COVID VACCINE FOR CHILDREN AGES 5-11 COMMUNICATIONS AND ADVOCACY TOOLKIT

Nearly two years into the pandemic, children ages 5-11 are now able to receive a vaccine for COVID-19. As pediatricians in each chapter navigate parental questions and concerns, distribution issues, and state politics, AAP chapters will play a crucial role as on-the-ground advocates, medical experts, and community leaders.

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For any questions or assistance with drafting communications materials or pitching op-eds, please reach out to Dan DeBrakeleer at ddebrakeleer@aap.org. For any questions about advocacy strategy and engagement of state policymakers or community partners, please reach out the State Advocacy team at stgov@aap.org.

TALKING POINTS

COVID-19 Vaccine for Children Talking Points

The AAP has developed an extensive messaging guide to help spokespeople navigate media inquiries regarding the 5-11 vaccine. [Talking points can be found here](#), and will be updated regularly as needed. The messaging guide includes talking points on the following topics:

- The importance of the protection the COVID-19 vaccine provides for children
- Why the COVID-19 vaccine is safe and effective for children

- Vaccine rollout plans
- Vaccine review process
- COVID-19 vaccines in the context of child/adolescent immunization program
- COVID-19 vaccination and masking
- Future authorization for children under 5 years old
- Vaccine requirements
- COVID-19 vaccine and flu immunization
- Disease-acquired immunity vs. vaccine-acquired immunity

As a reminder you can also visit AAP.org to view our [Policy Statement on COVID-19 Vaccination in Children and Adolescents](#) (aap.org)

OP-ED GUIDANCE

Writing an op-ed to your local print or online newspaper can be one effective way to draw attention to the importance of ensuring children can return to in-person learning safely.

An op-ed is a personal perspective typically 500-600 words in length, though each publication has unique requirements. Your piece should be timely and relevant to your community and reflect your own personal perspective as a child health expert.

If you are interested in writing an op-ed on this topic, please follow these steps:

1. If you are new to op-ed writing or would like a refresher, **please watch [this short tutorial on writing op-eds and letters to the editor from the AAP](#).**
2. Before drafting, think about these four keys to an effective op-ed: A timely news hook, a compelling personal perspective or patient story, state/local data or information and a call to action.
 - **Timely news hook:** What makes this op-ed relevant in your community/state right now? How has pediatric COVID affected your community?
 - **Personal narrative/patient story:** What unique perspective or story can you bring to help humanize this issue? How have younger children been impacted by COVID infections?
 - **State/local data or information:** For data on COVID-19 community transmission, you can visit the [CDC tracker](#). You can also find data on vaccine hesitancy by county and zip code [here](#).
 - **A call to action:** Which of these do you plan to focus on as a commonsense policy proposal? Focus on a simple argument and use that to develop an “ask”.

3. Get started on your draft! You can use and customize some of the key messages below to help draft your piece. These simple messages are only designed to help serve as a basic foundation and to help get you started.

Submitting your op-ed: Once you have initiated a draft op-ed, please contact Dan DeBrakeleer (ddebrakeleer@aap.org). We can provide suggestions or feedback, answer any questions, and help with pitching.

Please note that many op-eds are considered “exclusive;” you can only submit your piece to one newspaper at a time. Should one publication decline to publish your piece, you can resubmit to another, but you should avoid sending your op-ed to several newspapers at once. There is no guarantee that your op-ed will be published.

You can view some examples of well-written op-eds below:

The New York Times: [Yes, You’ll Want to Vaccinate Your Kids Against Covid. An Expert Explains Why.](#), by Dr. Lee Savio Beers

Winston-Salem Journal: [Our children need the vaccine — we all do](#), by Dr. David Tayloe

Pioneer Press: [The spirit of community has seen us through many crises. We need it now.](#), by Dr. Benson Hsu

Key op-ed messages/prompts:

- How is getting your child vaccinated a community act? How will this small action make such a huge difference, including for in-school learning and immunocompromised adults and children who cannot be vaccinated?
- Why is it important for children who have already had COVID to be vaccinated? What’s the difference between disease-acquired immunity and vaccine-acquired immunity?
- What are the long-term effects of COVID that children can face? How does the vaccine mitigate that risk?
- Are there local organizations you could partner with to make your message more powerful?

PRESS RELEASE TEMPLATE

Please see below for a customizable press release template for chapters looking to speak proactively to the 5-11 CDC/ACIP recommendation. A timely press release can help attract media attention and allow chapters to have more control over the narrative.

For assistance with drafting, editing, and building a reporter email list, please reach out to Dan DeBrakeleer (ddebrakeleer@aap.org).

FOR RELEASE:

November XX, 2021

MEDIA CONTACT:

[CONTACT NAME, EMAIL, PHONE]

[STATE] Pediatricians: COVID Vaccine is Safe, Effective, and Critical for 5 – 11-Year-old Children

[CHAPTER NAME] strongly encourages parents to vaccinate 5 – 11-year-old children against COVID-

19

[CITY, STATE] – [CHAPTER NAME] supports yesterday’s recommendation by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to recommend the use of a COVID-19 vaccine in children ages 5-11. [CHAPTER NAME] urges families to check with their pediatrician and community health care providers about how to get their eligible children vaccinated, pending a final recommendation from the CDC.

[CHAPTER PRESIDENT/LEADERSHIP QUOTE]

The recommendation comes nearly two years into the pandemic, which has resulted in [NUMBER – see pg. 5] cases of pediatric COVID in [STATE] and over 600 deaths across the country. As a result, critical in-school learning has been disrupted, [over 140,000 children in the U.S. have lost a primary or secondary caretaker](#), and mental health issues among kids [have grown at an alarming rate](#). Pediatricians are especially concerned about communities disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and are working to ensure equity in the vaccine’s distribution.

[CHAPTER NAME] recognizes that disparities in school funding, quality of school facilities, educational staffing, and resources for enriching curricula among schools have been exacerbated by the pandemic. Ongoing federal, state, and local funding should be provided for all schools so they can continue to implement all the COVID-19 mitigation and safety measures required to protect students and staff.

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[CHAPTER BOILERPLATE]

ADVOCACY GUIDE

This section contains advocacy recommendations for your chapter's consideration:

Distribution:

Flexibility in vaccine ordering: Initial shipments of vaccines for children ages 5-11 will be sent to physician offices primarily in 300 (check #) dose kits to meet initial demand. Some states, however, are reporting flexibility on the part of state immunization programs to permit clinical sites to fill exact orders of doses of vaccine shipments. AAP chapters can advocate with state immunization program managers to adopt similar flexibilities in vaccine shipping, particularly after immediate post-recommendation demand is met.

Enrollment:

Enrollment of pediatricians in vaccine ordering: Rollout of vaccine to adults and adolescents focused primarily on vaccine distribution outside of the medical home setting—given the close relationship between childhood vaccination and the pediatric medical home, leveraging the reach and expertise of pediatricians in rollout of vaccine for children ages 5-11 will be critical. A necessary precondition for successful engagement of the pediatric medical home in this coming phase is ensuring that pediatric clinics are signed up to receive shipments of vaccine. Links to [state vaccine enrollment resources are available from the AAP](#), and AAP chapters are encouraged to reach out to members about the importance of sign up at this time, and to sustain any existing member outreach efforts.

It is important to note that enrollment as a Vaccines For Children (VFC) program participant does not translate to enrollment to administer COVID-19 vaccine; as such, pediatricians will have to enroll in the COVID-19 Vaccination Program separately to administer the vaccine. While the COVID-19 vaccine is not being distributed via the VFC program, states can use existing VFC infrastructure and participant networks to make information available to pediatricians about COVID-19 vaccination for children ages 5-11.

Public Outreach:

Pediatricians play a crucial role to educate parents and community members about the importance of vaccines and address any misinformation or concerns about the safety of vaccines. State chapters can advocate for state immunization programs to broaden public outreach especially in underresourced areas and urge state policymakers to plan for equitable vaccine access that includes outreach to communities with concerns about the vaccine. In addition, chapters can

advocate for state immunization officials to include pediatricians in campaigns to spread awareness about the importance of vaccines, particularly true for clinicians who serve children and youth with special health care needs, as well as those that are in hard-to-reach areas.

Payment:

While the federal government has purchased the vaccines, the cost of vaccine administration is separate. Adequate payment is essential for pediatric practices to be able to afford the costs of storing and administering the vaccine. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) announced that they will pay \$40 per dose for vaccine administration for children ages 5-11. State chapters can advocate for state Medicaid programs, Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) programs, and managed care organizations to adopt the same payment rate. In addition, payers can also pay pediatricians for counseling children and families about the COVID-19 vaccine, even if it is not administered; doing so will ensure that pediatric practices have the resources needed to have these important conversations with families. To help, the Academy has provided two versions of a letter to payers—one to [private payers](#) and one to state [Medicaid and CHIP Directors](#), calling on them to pay appropriately for the new vaccine administration codes and to pay for COVID-19 vaccine counseling.

ADDITIONAL PARENT-FACING MATERIALS

Sample Social Media Posts:

- The COVID-19 vaccine is now available for kids ages 5 -11; this is their shot! Vaccinating kids and teens against COVID will help them get safely back to the things that make them happy and healthy!
- Check out AAP's COVID-19 vaccine communications toolkit for free resources such as social media graphics, videos, @healthychildren articles, and more. #ThisIsOurShot
<https://www.aap.org/en/news-room/campaigns-and-toolkits/covid-19-vaccine-toolkit/>
- Scientists have been developing the technology for messenger RNA vaccines, like the COVID-19 vaccine, for over 30 years. COVID-19 vaccination is the best way to protect your child from disease and to help them thrive! Learn more on how #VaccinesWork:
<https://youtu.be/cqrM1bqQ7AE>
- Vaccination is the best way to protect your child from COVID-19. Learn how mRNA vaccines work like invisible coaches to teach your child's immune system to recognize the virus. #VaccinesWork <https://youtu.be/YOlrNlvEiMw>

Don't forget about the many sample graphics, videos, and more housed in [AAP's COVID-19 Vaccine Campaign Toolkit!](#)

HealthyChildren.org articles:

[Ask the Pediatrician: COVID-19 Roundup](#)

[How the COVID-19 vaccine works](#)

[Developing the COVID-19 vaccine](#)

[Getting your child ready for the COVID-19 vaccine](#)

[Vaccine-acquired immunity versus disease-acquired immunity](#)

[Regarding myocarditis](#)

Videos:

[How mRNA Vaccines Work](#)

[How mRNA Covid-19 Vaccines Were Developed](#)