



Memorandum

To: Child Welfare Staff
From: Mary Havick, Deputy Division Director of Child Welfare
Date: March 18, 2021
Re: COVID-19 Vaccination for Children and Youth in DFCS Custody

As access to the COVID-19 vaccine continues to increase, it is important that we are consistent in our approach to the vaccination of children and youth in our care. Though the age limit may change in the future as additional vaccines and doses are approved, currently the vaccine is only available to youth starting at 16 years old and older.

Our approach to the authorization of youth to be vaccinated for COVID-19 includes the following considerations:

- If a youth 16 years or older is in our temporary custody, the Division will need permission/consent from the parent(s) in order to proceed with a COVID-19 vaccination.
- If a youth 16 years or older is in our permanent custody, the Division is able to grant permission/consent to proceed with a COVID-19 vaccination. This consent should be given at the county level.

If there is any question regarding legal status, the county SAAG or Regional Permanency Field Program Specialists can be reached for guidance and clarification.

As with adults, the COVID-19 vaccine is encouraged but not mandatory for youth. Division staff should speak with youth, their parents and caregivers about the vaccine and respect their judgment and decision regarding whether to get vaccinated or not. For questionable situations, the youth's pediatrician should be contacted for advice. The following websites provide information that may be valuable to share as part of any COVID-19 discussion:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/children/symptoms.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/info-by-product/index.html>

<https://www.webmd.com/vaccines/covid-19-vaccine/news/20210215/when-will-kids-get-covid-vaccines>

As noted in the WebMD link, "Until [children/youth] can get vaccinated, parents should protect their children from COVID-19 by continuing to practice prevention measures, such as wearing face masks, maintaining safe physical distance from others and by practicing appropriate hand hygiene."