

Creating Accessible COVID-19 Vaccine Sites for Youth with Disabilities

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Youth with disabilities and unique health needs should be prioritized for vaccination due to their potentially higher risk for severe response to COVID-19. Here are some tips to get you started.

It is critical that vaccination planning for youth begin with this group in mind. Limited community access, transportation challenges, unsurmountable daily caregiving responsibilities for families, the unpredictability of a child's reaction to a new environment, and vaccine hesitancy are just a few challenges that families of children with special health care and unique needs have informed us need to be considered for vaccinations. In many cases, these individuals and families have also experienced extreme hardships due to isolation and the loss of services and supports during the pandemic. These families may benefit from more direct, supportive interactions. Special education directors, school nurses and special education case managers may be instrumental in helping identify and support families.

- **Be flexible:** There are very few processes that cannot be adjusted to support a person to get the vaccine. Make sure your staff and volunteers understand this.
- **Hold smaller vaccination events:** Smaller vaccination events can accommodate children with sensory, cognitive, or anxiety challenges. Drive-up or small classroom events could be routinely offered, even alongside larger events.
 - Include community-based events that have morning, afternoon, and nighttime options and lower numbers that are targeted for those who are more vulnerable.
- **Consider transportation options:** Many families face transportation barriers, so multiple access options should be considered.
- **Streamline parental consent:** Allow for verbal consent, or help with the parental consent process.
- **Make scheduling appointments easy:** Offer phone or in-person assistance to schedule appointments. Consider targeted outreach by trusted community members.
- **Consider whole family accommodations:** Parents may also have a disability so accommodations and accessibility should always be provided from registration through vaccination.
- **Be empathetic to vaccine concerns:** See Information for Caregivers below under Additional Resources.
- **Targeted outreach is critical:** Involve others in the planning. For example, reach out to special education staff and/or advisory councils for school-based vaccinations and specialty clinics for clinic-based vaccinations.

Additional resources

- Best Practices for COVID-19 Testing and Vaccination Sites: Disability-related Accessibility (www.health.state.mn.us/communities/equity/about/c19testing.html)

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- Accessibility Checklist for COVID-19 Testing and Vaccination Sites (PDF)
(www.health.state.mn.us/communities/equity/about/Checklist_Accessibility.pdf)
- Disability Etiquette: Considerations When Working with People with Disabilities (PDF)
(www.health.state.mn.us/communities/equity/about/disabilityetiquette.pdf)
- COVID-19 Vaccine for Youth with Special Needs or Disabilities: Information for Caregivers (PDF)
(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/vaccine/vaxspecial.pdf)



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