

# White House outlines effort to vaccinate young as schools start to reopen

August 6 2021, by Ernie Mundell and Robin Foster

---



(HealthDay)—Worried about low vaccination rates among the young as

the new school year looms, the White House on Thursday unveiled a new initiative to get shots into the arms of more students.

The push will include enlisting pediatricians to make COVID-19 vaccination part of back-to-[school](#) sports physicals and encouraging schools to host vaccination clinics.

The initiative was announced by Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona as part of a broader "[return to school roadmap](#)," aimed at getting students back in the classroom for learning this fall.

The vaccination push comes as schools around the country are beginning to reopen. Starting on Saturday, text chains and phone banks will encourage vaccination for the young, although experts and school superintendents told *The New York Times* that boosting vaccination rates among students may be a tall order.

The Pfizer [vaccine](#) was authorized for people aged 12 and older in May, but [young people](#) remain far less likely than [older adults](#) to have gotten their shots. Only 40.2% of 12- to 15-year-olds and 50.6% of 16- to 17-year olds have received at least one dose, according to the [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).

The agency said last week it wanted in-person schooling to resume across the country and called for universal mask use by students, staff and visitors in schools, regardless of their vaccination status or the rate of community transmission of the virus.

"Children should return to full-time, in-person learning in the fall, with proper prevention strategies in place," CDC Director Dr. Rochelle Walensky said during a news briefing.

The administration is focusing on school athletics as an important path to

vaccination. Millions of American students play organized sports, and some school officials are making the case that if student athletes get vaccinated, they can avoid quarantining—and forfeiting their games—if they are exposed to an infected person, the *Times* reported.

To that end, a White House official said on the condition of anonymity that the administration has enlisted the help of various groups, including the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Medical Society for Sports Medicine, to put out guidance for doctors and to update school physical forms. Cardona and Doug Emhoff, husband of Vice President Kamala Harris, plan to visit a school vaccination clinic in Kansas next week, Cardona said.

But some [school officials](#) are finding that persuading parents to get their students vaccinated is a difficult task.

"For people who are for it, it's an easy one—they support vaccination as a strong strategy to fight COVID, and they don't see any issue with the use of public space," Kristi Wilson, superintendent of the Buckeye Elementary School District, near Phoenix, told the *Times*. She recently wrapped up a term as president of AASA: The School Superintendents Association, which represents 13,000 school superintendents across the country.

"But the other side I'm hearing is that, 'Where do you draw the line? Who's going to administer it? Even if public health does it, is it an appropriate use of space?' If you have a community that is very anti-vaccination, how do you manage that?" she said.

**More information:** The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more on [COVID-19](#).



Citation: White House outlines effort to vaccinate young as schools start to reopen (2021, August 6) retrieved 27 April 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2021-08-white-house-outlines-effort-vaccinate.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.