

COVID-19 Vaccines for Youth

Understanding Consent

COVID-19 vaccines are now available for youth. Many providers require a parent or guardian to consent for people under the age of 18 to get vaccinated. However, if you are under 18 and independent from your parents, you may consent for yourself in some cases or get consent through your school if you are experiencing housing instability and not with a parent or guardian. This document shows the different kinds of consent allowed under state law, how to find a provider who can serve you, and how to prepare for your vaccine appointment.

Adults who can consent for you:



- Parent
- Guardian or legal custodian
- A foster parent or other person authorized by a court to consent to medical care for a child in an out-of-home placement (Chapter 13.32A or 13.34 RCW)
- A person who has been given signed authorization to make health care decisions for you
- A relative responsible for your health care
- A school nurse, counselor, or homeless liaison (if you are defined as homeless under the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Act)*

You can consent for yourself if:



- **You are legally emancipated.** You're 16 or older and you have filed and been granted emancipation from your parents.
- **You are married to an emancipated minor or an adult.**
- **A provider determines you are a mature minor** under the Mature Minor Doctrine.**

*More information on consent using McKinney-Vento:

Under state law, school nurses, school counselors, and homeless student liaisons are authorized to provide consent for vaccinations for a homeless youth or young adult (as defined under the [federal McKinney-Vento homeless education act - English only](#)) who is not under the physical custody of a parent or guardian.

Resource link: The National Center for Homeless Education, *Supporting the Education of Unaccompanied Students Experiencing Homelessness*, <https://nche.ed.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/youth.pdf> - English only

**More information on the Mature Minor Doctrine:

Some providers allow minors to give a valid consent under the "Mature Minor Doctrine" if they are capable of understanding or appreciating the consequences of a medical procedure.

In determining whether the patient is a mature minor, providers will evaluate the minor's age, intelligence, maturity, training, experience, economic independence or lack thereof, general conduct as an adult and freedom from the control of parents.

Providers accept consent in a few different ways.

- Verbal consent (over the phone or in person)
- Written consent (a form)
- Some require both written and verbal consent.
- In-person consent from the adult providing consent for you.

Tips for getting vaccinated

- **Use the filtering options on Vaccine Locator (vaccinelocator.doh.wa.gov) or call the provider to see what kind of consent the provider accepts.** The Youth Friendly filtering options on Vaccine Locator will help you find a provider that will work with your situation. For example, if you have an adult who can consent for you but can't go with you to the appointment, find a provider that accepts written consent.
- **Look for vaccine locations that accept walk-ins or call to make an appointment,** if you do not have a parent/guardian who can fill out the form online. Many providers ask that a parent or guardian fill out a consent form to make an appointment online.
- **Check in with your school.** If you are experiencing housing instability, McKinney-Vento may apply to you. (See the front for more information.) You may be able to work with the school nurse, school counselor, or homeless student liaison to provide consent.
- **Prepare for the type of consent you need to provide:**
 - If an adult needs to be present at your appointment, coordinate with them.
 - If the provider accepts written consent, see if the person providing consent for you can print and sign the form.
 - If you are an emancipated minor or a minor married to an emancipated minor or an adult, you may need to bring documentation.
 - If you are receiving consent using McKinney-Vento, and are worried that the provider will have questions, you can bring copy of the Informed Consent law: RCW [7.70.065](https://leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=7.70.065) – English only and highlight the portion specific to schools. (Link to law: <https://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=7.70.065> – English only). Note: This is NOT a requirement.
 - If you are seeking to consent for yourself through the Mature Minor Doctrine, you may need to provide documentation and information showing that you are independent from your parents. This is not required by all providers but may help. Some providers do not do mature minor determination onsite but do accept mature minor determinations from previous providers.