

## Power of Providers (POP)

# Back to School COVID-19 Vaccine/Booster Talking Points

Audience: Young adults aged 18-24, family members of young adults, parent/guardians of school-aged children (under 18)

*All Health Care Professionals*

You are a trusted source of information, and your patients/clients look to you for the facts and value your recommendation. These talking points can be used by anyone, in any field.

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## GENERAL QUESTIONS

### Why Should Young Adults Get Vaccinated?

- It's free and fast
- Protect yourself and others
  - Before you show any symptoms or test positive you are contagious – which means you can infect other people you love and care about
- The COVID-19 vaccine is safe - millions of other people your age have already gotten it!
- The more people who get vaccinated, the more likely we will be able to slow the spread and prevent further strains from developing
  - Young adults are responsible for most of the COVID-19 spread
- Some people have mild cases, and some have severe cases, you never know how it will affect you (or others) – don't take any chances
- Everyone can get COVID-19, however those who are NOT vaccinated tend to have much more severe illness
  - You can experience symptoms for months after the initial illness
- Even if you've had COVID-19, you are not immune from getting it again – you still need to stay up to date on your vaccines
- Getting COVID-19 means you'll have to isolate while you are contagious; you'll miss work and/or school – potentially a loss of income or an impact to your grades
- If you get sick, you'll miss out on parties with your friends, dating or time with your significant other, sporting events, concerts, other hobbies

### Why Should Kids Get Vaccinated?

- The COVID-19 vaccine is safe and recommended for all ages, 6 months and older
  - Booster doses are recommended for ages 12 years and older
- Getting COVID-19 means your child will have to isolate while contagious; they will potentially miss school, which could result in falling behind on schoolwork and missing sports and social activities

- Everyone can get COVID-19, however those who are not vaccinated tend to have more severe illness
- Even if a child has had COVID-19, they can get it again; staying up to date on vaccination and getting your child boosted when eligible is important

### Why Are Boosters Necessary?

- COVID-19 boosters decrease your risk of infection and severe illness
  - Protection from your primary series wanes over time and boosters help lengthen immunity
  - Boosters also help protect from new variants and provide additional protection for those who are immunocompromised
- Booster doses are proven to reduce your chances of severe illness, hospitalization, and death from COVID-19
- Staying up to date on booster doses is important even if you have been infected with COVID-19
- The newest COVID-19 variants are highly transmissible – even more contagious than the original strains
- The updated, bivalent booster targets the original strain of coronavirus and the newer Omicron BA.4/BA.5 subvariants, which account for most COVID-19 cases today
  - Getting this booster offers broad protection and restores immunity that may have waned since your last dose

### Points to Emphasize to Young Adults

- Protecting Others
  - If you won't do it for yourself, **do it for the ones you love**
    - Getting vaccinated helps reduce the risk of spreading the virus to high-risk family members such as older parents/grandparents, people who are immunocompromised, and those who may not be eligible for vaccination
    - Ensure your entire family is vaccinated – both parents/guardians AND children; young people can spread the virus and get infected/sick themselves so it's important your entire household is protected
- Many people who have had COVID-19 have reported on-going symptoms weeks to months after initial infection; not much is understood about **Long COVID**, but early research shows those who were unvaccinated at the time of infection suffer worse long-term effects

### Points to Emphasize to Parents/Guardians

- COVID-19 is about more than just being mildly sick for a couple of days
  - If your child tests positive for COVID-19 (regardless of whether they experience symptoms) they will need to isolate; since the current variant (BA.5) of COVID-19 is

extremely contagious, other household members are likely to get infected as well; this could lead to many **missed days of school and work**

- For many families this is not just an inconvenience but also a **financial hardship**
- Despite COVID-19 cases remaining high in most areas, **schools are open**, and kids are back to in-person learning.
  - It's up to parents/guardians to protect their children and help control the spread by ensuring they are up to date on their COVID-19 vaccines so schools can remain open

## DISTINCT GROUPS

### Racial/Ethnic Minorities, Immigrants

It is important to acknowledge that some people have experienced racism and/or discrimination when receiving medical care. If you encounter a patient/client or family member who is hesitant about the COVID-19 vaccine or booster because of this, address the situation. Here are some suggestions on how to engage:

- Use a [trauma-informed care](#) approach
- Listen to the patient and acknowledge their concerns
- Reinforce that the COVID-19 vaccine is safe
  - Large vaccine trials were conducted, and people of color were represented in the testing
  - Consider citing trusted messengers from the community, or others your patients might find credible; you can share stories from the [We Consider campaign](#) (black voices tell their stories of how they overcame vaccine hesitancy and chose COVID-19 vaccination)
- Be sure to answer any questions they have, let them know your goal is to be honest and transparent
  - Despite previous violations of trust, today's health care information can be trusted
- Assure them that you want them to feel safe and comfortable with whatever decision they make
- If they aren't ready to get vaccinated/boosted, remind them to come back soon, go to [Vaccine Locator](#) or [PrepMod](#) to find a vaccine clinic near them
- For immigrants, reassure them that personal information will not be collected, and immigration status is not asked/required

### Are there special reasons for people of color to get vaccinated for COVID-19? YES!

- According to the CDC, Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino people are more likely to get seriously ill and die from COVID-19
  - They are vulnerable to risk factors that make COVID-19 worse (applicable to children and young adults)
  - They are less likely to get vaccinated than other racial and ethnic minority groups and non-Hispanic White people
- People of color are overrepresented in front-line, essential jobs which can put them at increased risk of exposure to COVID-19 (applicable to young adults, 18-24)

## LGBTQ+

According to the [Kaiser Family Foundation](#) (KFF), LGBT adults have very high COVID-19 vaccination rates, however they also bear a disproportionate burden from the pandemic.

To ensure that LGBTQ+ youth and young adults stay up to date with the COVID-19 vaccination, **especially boosters**, we encourage you to be aware of the following, which research has shown to be experienced at higher rates among this group:

- Comorbidities
    - Remind patients that they could be at high-risk for severe illness
  - Stigma and discrimination in the health system
    - Be transparent; remind patients that the vaccine is safe for everyone
  - Mental health problems
    - Staying healthy will help allow them to live their usual life and avoid isolation/quarantine
  - Economic hardship
    - The vaccine is free and getting COVID-19 will cause them to miss work, school
- ❖ These issues serve as essential reasons for LGBTQ+ youth, young adults, and their family members to stay up to date on COVID-19 vaccinations – to stay physically and mentally healthy

## Special Needs

- If a child has [special needs](#), accommodations can be made
  - Assure the family that you/your staff can provide an environment that will work for them; if this is not possible or you are not a vaccinator, help them find a location that is accessible or refer them to [Vaccine Locator](#) and [PrepMod](#) to find a vaccine clinic.
- If a child is homebound, connect them to a mobile vaccine team; a [patient handout](#) is available to print on the POP member resource page

## Low-Income

- If a family or young adult is concerned about cost or accessibility, there are a few options to mention:
  - All COVID-19 vaccines are free; health insurance is not needed
    - If a person is worried about paying an office visit fee or co-pay, they can visit a pharmacy or clinic
  - Check the vaccine tools below to find locations that are open on various days/times to accommodate work and school schedules
  - The PrepMod search tool will locate mobile vaccine clinics around the state
  - Many companies offer paid time off for employees and their families to get vaccinated – remind people to check for this benefit

## RESOURCES

Power of Providers Member Resources – <https://doh.wa.gov/pop>

The Washington State Department of Health (DOH) – <https://doh.wa.gov/>

- DOH COVID-19 Vaccine - <https://doh.wa.gov/emergencies/covid-19/vaccine-information>
- Vaccinating Youth - <https://doh.wa.gov/emergencies/covid-19/vaccine-information/vaccinating-youth>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention – <https://www.cdc.gov/>

- Vaccines for COVID-19 - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/index.html>

## VACCINATION LOCATIONS

- Vaccine Locator - <https://vaccinelocator.doh.wa.gov/>
- PrepMod mobile vaccination clinics – <https://prepmod.doh.wa.gov/>
- <https://www.vaccines.gov/>

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