

COVID-19 Vaccines for Youth

Understanding Consent for Community-based Organizations Serving Youth

COVID-19 vaccines are now available for youth ages 5 to 17. While many kinds of consent are legal under Washington state law, many vaccine providers require parent/guardian consent to give vaccines to youth. This documents the kinds of consent allowed under state law, and how your organization can help youth (especially unhoused youth) get vaccinated against COVID-19.

Adults who can consent for youth:



- 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 them
- A relative responsible for their health care
- A school nurse, counselor, or homeless liaison (for a youth defined as homeless under the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Act)*

Youth can consent for themselves if:



- **They are legally emancipated.** They're 16 years old or older and they have filed and been granted emancipation from their parents.
- **They are married to an emancipated minor or an adult.**
- **A provider determines they 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 them.

How to help youth get their vaccine

- **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 and the youth find a place that takes the kind of consent the youth can provide. See “Help youth prepare for the type of consent they need to provide” below for tips on preparing for an appointment.
- **Look for vaccine locations that accept walk-ins or call to make an appointment.** Many providers ask for parent or guardian consent to make an appointment online.
- **Offer transportation to and from vaccine appointments.** If you cannot provide transportation, check with your local health jurisdiction or DOH’s [COVID-19 Vaccine: Transportation Resources](#) – English only. (Link: <https://www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/1600/coronavirus/820-151-COVID19VaccineTransportationResources.pdf>)
- **Connect with schools around consent.** If the youth you are working with fits the criteria for McKinney-Vento (see the front for more information), you can work with the school nurse, school counselor, or homeless student liaison to provide consent. Some providers require that an adult is present for vaccination. Confirm or coordinate with school staff ahead of time to decide who will be able to accompany the student to their appointment.
- **Host your own mobile vaccine event or direct youth to an existing clinic.**
 - For more information on hosting your own event, see [COVID-19 Vaccine Resource Guide to Support Community-led Vaccination Efforts Spanish \(PDF\)](#) (English Link: <https://www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/1600/coronavirus/VACCSSupportCommunity-ledVaccinationEfforts.pdf>)(Spanish Link:[Guía de recursos sobre la vacuna contra la COVID-19 para apoyar las iniciativas de vacunación dirigidas por la comunidad \(wa.gov\)](#))
 - [Request a Care-A-Van event](#) – English only. The WA State Department of Health Care-A-Van (doh.wa.gov/CareAVan) can bring vaccines to you. Funding is available for eligible hosting community organizations. The Care-A-Van accepts all forms of consent outlined on the front of the document, including consent from mature minors.
- **Help youth prepare for the type of consent they need to provide:**
 - If an adult needs to be present at the youth’s appointment, coordinate with them.
 - If the provider accepts written consent, help the youth get the form printed and signed.
 - If they are an emancipated minor or a minor married to an emancipated minor or an adult, help them gather appropriate documentation.
 - If they are receiving consent using McKinney-Vento, bring a copy of the Informed Consent law: RCW [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>)
 - If they are seeking to consent through the Mature Minor Doctrine, help them prepare documentation and information showing that they are independent from their 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.