

Gov. Pritzker Issues Executive Order To Protect Young Children Not Eligible For The COVID-19 Vaccine

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CHICAGO – To prevent further spread of COVID-19 and to protect the health and safety of Illinois’ youngest residents, Governor JB Pritzker joined Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) Director Dr. Ngozi Ezike, Department of Human Services Secretary Grace Hou, and Department of Childhood and Family Services Director Marc Smith today to announce new vaccination or weekly testing requirements for individuals who work in licensed day care centers.

Over 55,000 daycare center staff statewide will now be required to receive the COVID-19 vaccine if they have not done so already. Employees in these settings who are unable or unwilling to receive the vaccine will be required to get tested for COVID-19 at least once per week. Increased testing frequency may be required in certain situations.

“Vaccinations offer life-saving protection for the people who receive them and make the community safer for the people who can’t – including the babies, toddlers, and young children not yet eligible for the vaccine,” said Governor JB Pritzker. “By extending vaccine-or-test requirements to those who work at licensed day care centers, we are adding another level of protection for our youngest residents and preventing outbreaks in daycare centers as more and more parents return to work.”

To ensure Illinois youth who are not currently eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine are protected, all licensed daycare center staff in Illinois will be required to receive their first dose of a two-dose COVID-19 vaccine series or a single-dose COVID-19 vaccine by December 3, 2021, and the second dose of a two-dose COVID-19 vaccine series by January 3, 2022. Any daycare center staff members who are not fully vaccinated by December 3, 2021, will have to do, at a minimum, weekly COVID-19 testing until they are fully vaccinated.

Licensed daycare centers are child care facilities licensed by the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). The centers are operated outside an individual’s home and regularly provide child care for groups of children ages 0-12. There are 2,872 licensed day care centers in Illinois.

“For continued, ongoing protection of our youth not yet eligible for a COVID-19 vaccine, this Executive Order is the best way to protect the lives of thousands of Illinoisans,” said IDPH Director Dr. Ngozi Ezike. “Scientific and medical experts have reviewed the data and found the COVID-19 vaccine will avoid serious illness, hospitalization, and even death.”

“Thanks to Governor Pritzker’s leadership, the requirement for vaccination will help our daycare workers who are the woven fabrics of our communities across the state put their health first and best protect children,” said Grace B. Hou, Secretary, Illinois Department of Human Services. “Our goals are simple. We want to keep our youth protected from COVID-19 in every way possible.”

“Parents and families across Illinois trust daycare staff with the health and safety of their young children every day. Vaccinated daycare workers offer another level of protections and an increased level of comfort for parents and caregivers whose infants and toddlers are not yet eligible for the vaccine,” said Marc D. Smith, Director, Illinois Department of Children and Family Services.

These requirements build on the Pritzker Administration’s existing vaccination or regular testing requirements for all Pre-K-12 teachers and staff; all higher education

personnel; all higher education students; and healthcare workers in a variety of settings, such as hospitals, nursing homes, urgent care facilities, and physician offices, which were announced on August 26th, 2021.

“The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted communities across the state, especially communities of color, over the last year and a half. I commend Governor Pritzker for his ongoing commitment to protecting the health and safety of all Illinois residents,” said Senator Paciones-Zayas (D-Chicago). “This Executive Order will keep our youngest constituents safe while ensuring our critical daycare center staff are protected as well.”

“The COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately affected vulnerable populations and communities of color. As such, Illinois Action for Children & many of our partner organizations who provide child care services have already mandated the vaccine for our staff. We welcome this mandate from the Governor as we do all we can to prevent the spread of the coronavirus and prioritize the health and safety of our staff and the families we serve,” said April Janney, President and CEO of Illinois Action for Children.

“As child care providers and staff, we have to do what we can to protect families’ children. Parents want to know their children are safe in our care. We also want to protect the financial security of our staff, and of our center, and the vaccine can help us do that to get to a healthier, more stable future,” said Dr. Jill Andrews, Founder & Administrator, Kiddie Kollege of Fairfield.

“The COVID-19 vaccine helps protect our early childhood workforce,” said Marcy Mendenhall, President & CEO, SAL Family and Community Services. “I applaud Governor Pritzker for his ongoing commitment to protecting the health and safety of all Illinois residents, especially our youngest Illinoisans.”

“Child care teachers and providers aren’t just protecting themselves with the vaccine, they’re protecting others, including the children they care for. Many of us get flu shots every year, and we should do the same for the COVID-19 vaccine,” said Brenda Crisp, Executive Director, Uni Pres Kindercottage. “Let’s get vaccinated, or get tested, so that we can protect ourselves, the children we care for, and our futures.”

“As leaders in the community, we have a responsibility to keep ourselves, the children we care for and our community safe,” said Dara Munson, President & CEO of Family Focus. “We continue to fight COVID-19 – and vaccination is the best step to do just that. I am always inspired by our caregivers and this is a moment to demonstrate that the health and safety of everyone, especially our youth, comes first.”

On August 4th, 2021, Governor Pritzker announced vaccinations would be required for all state employees who work in the state's congregate facilities, including individuals at the Illinois Departments of Human Services (IDHS), Corrections (IDOC), Veterans Affairs (IDVA) and Juvenile Justice (IDJJ).

A masking requirement for all Pre-K-12 schools and childcare facilities, including indoor P-12 recreation, has been in effect in Illinois since August 4, 2021.

To slow the spread of the highly transmissible COVID-19 Delta variant, all Illinois residents over the age of two have been required to wear a mask in all indoor settings since August 30, 2021 regardless of vaccination status.

Vaccination is the key to ending the COVID-19 pandemic. A [new report](#) from the Kaiser Family Foundation indicates that from June through September 2021, approximately 90,000 COVID-19 deaths among adults may have been prevented if they had received the vaccine. All Illinois residents 12 years old and older are eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine at no cost and proof of immigration status is not required to receive the vaccine. To find a vaccination center near you, go to vaccines.gov.