

# Illinois Schools Prepare To Vaccinate Kids 5-11

by Kevin Bessler  
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**SPRINGFIELD** – Illinois schools will likely play a role in delivering COVID-19 vaccines to kids aged 5 through 11.

A Pfizer vaccine will likely be approved for that age group in the coming weeks. Federal regulators will meet over the next two weeks to weigh the benefits of giving shots to young kids.

The White House reportedly told Gov. J.B. Pritzker to start preparing the state to vaccinate children 5 and older by early November. The Biden administration has purchased 65 million pediatric doses of the Pfizer vaccine, enough to vaccinate 28 million children. Pfizer's vaccine is currently the only vaccine authorized for emergency use in children as young as 12.

Many school districts held vaccination clinics for children 12 and up, so they had a chance to work out the kinks. One such district is Bloomington District 87 where Barry Reilly is the superintendent of schools.

"We will likely have vaccination clinics to the extent that we can to make it a little bit easier for our elementary kids and parents to get that done if they choose to do so," Reilly said.

Des Plaines School District 62 also held a vaccination clinic for older students.

"Our last clinic was very successful with 60 people receiving their vaccine," said Jennifer Tempest Bova, director of community relations. "We are hopeful to have something aligned next month should the FDA approve vaccines for children 5 through 11."

Pritzker has said he is not considering a mandate that would require younger school children to be vaccinated against COVID-19. When asked earlier this month, he replied, "It's not something we're looking at doing."

California is the first state to mandate the shot for all students, which will not go into effect until the vaccine for younger kids is approved.

County health departments are also preparing for the possibility of vaccinating younger children. At a news conference Thursday, Monica Hendrickson, the Peoria City/County health administrator said the area's hospitals, health centers, and health departments were able to pre-order the pediatric vaccines.

"This first go-round we had a limited number of vaccinations that we could order, and we are looking for, in Peoria County alone, there are 15,000 residents approximately that are ages 5 to 11," Hendrickson said.