



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **IDPH Teams Up with ICAAP to Educate Pediatricians and Public on Vaccines for Children Under 5 Ahead of CDC Approval**

*Pediatricians' Group is Hosting Bi-Weekly Podcast to Dedicated to Educating Members and Increasing COVID-19 Vaccination Rates*

**SPRINGFIELD** - As pediatric vaccines have cleared the FDA's first regulatory hurdle and are expected to be recommended by the CDC later this week, the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) announced today that it is supporting the Illinois Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (ICAAP) effort to carry out a robust COVID-19 vaccination campaign for children from six months to four years old. Public health officials have been laying the groundwork for the effort in anticipation of the authorization for vaccines produced by Moderna and Pfizer-BioNTech.

"It is truly wonderful news that vaccinations are on the horizon for this youngest group of Illinoisans. We encourage every parent or guardian of children six months and older to consult with their pediatricians and make plans to get their children vaccinated and protected from COVID-19," said IDPH Acting Director Amaal Tokars. "Vaccination remains the strongest way to protect your children and your extended family from COVID-19."

While children have generally not experienced the worst outcomes for Covid compared to older people, more than 42,000 children have been hospitalized and more than 1,000 have died due to COVID-19. Both newly approved vaccines were proven to be safe and effective in clinical trials. They will be especially beneficial for children with underlying conditions who are more susceptible to serious outcomes. Vaccinations for young children will not only protect the children, but also inhibit transmission of the COVID-19 virus and protect everyone in the family, including older relatives in multi-generation households.

ICAAP launched Illinois Vaccinates Against COVID-19 (I-VAC) program in fall 2021 around the time authorization was granted for the first shots for children, with the goal of encouraging healthcare provider organizations to integrate vaccinations into their clinical routine. The program is conducted in partnership with the Extension for Community Health Outcomes (ECHO)-Chicago at the University of Chicago and the Illinois Academy of Family Physicians (IAFP).

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In May, the pediatricians' group launched a bi-weekly Beyond the Needle podcast which designed for and by physicians and dedicated to increasing COVID-19 vaccination rates. Clinicians on the podcast tackle the real-world barriers to COVID-19 vaccination uptake and share their experiences and lessons learned throughout the pandemic.

ICAAP is also distributing a [toolkit to pediatricians and healthcare providers](#) to assist them in planning for the vaccine rollout for the youngest age group and communicating with parents about the protection provided by vaccinations and their safety.

Since the COVID-19 vaccine became available to the public, more than 8 million adults and children across the state of Illinois have been fully vaccinated for COVID-19 vaccine or booster dose. Illinois remains among the highest in the Midwest for its vaccination rates, with more than two thirds of the population fully vaccinated.

To find a COVID-19 vaccination location near you, go to [www.vaccines.gov](http://www.vaccines.gov).

In addition, the federal government has established a website that provides an all-purpose toolkit that provides information on how to obtain masks, treatment, vaccines and testing resources for all areas of the country at: <https://www.covid.gov/>.

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