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Students Missing Routine-but-Critical Vaccines During Pandemic

New initiative helps parents and educators get more children and adolescents protected against potentially deadly diseases as they return to school buildings

Alexandria, Va. (August 10, 2021) — During the COVID-19 pandemic, millions of children—at least one in five—have missed critical vaccinations that keep them healthy and our communities free from disease.

Students without these vaccinations may not be eligible to return to in-person learning as school starts this year. Even worse, losing herd immunity could put millions of unvaccinated children and adults at risk for deadly or debilitating diseases such as measles, whooping cough and polio.

The Learning First Alliance (LFA) has launched a new public information campaign, “The Power to Protect,” and a new website, www.getvaxfacts.org, to remind parents and guardians of the need for these routine shots and how to obtain vaccinations at no cost if needed. LFA is a coalition of 12 national education groups representing 10 million parents, teachers, support staff, principals, superintendents, school board members, and teacher educators. This effort to encourage parents and caregivers to bring their children up to date on their vaccinations will help keep schools safe, students healthy and ready to learn, as students return to in-person classes over the next few weeks.

According to a recent Blue Cross Blue Shield [survey](#), 40% of parents say their children missed vaccinations due to COVID-19. Vaccines provide powerful protection against 16 serious diseases throughout a child’s lifetime and keep those diseases from spreading to others, including students, teachers, staff, and vulnerable community members.

“We know that caregivers are stressed and many have delayed doctor’s appointments or opted for telehealth appointments during the pandemic,” said Richard M. Long, executive director of the Learning First Alliance. “Childhood and adolescent vaccination rates in the United States have declined at an alarming rate as a result of missed appointments.”

Adolescents will also have the option of a COVID-19 vaccination this year. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has expanded the emergency use authorization for the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine to include adolescents 12 to 15 years old. The CDC has updated its clinical guidance to allow COVID-19 vaccines to be administered at the same time as other routine vaccines, a policy supported by the American Academy of Pediatrics, so students can still catch up with routine vaccinations.

This website, www.Getvaxfacts.org, has information on each of the 16 diseases and conditions that are protected by vaccinations for children and adolescents, charts for scheduling vaccines and information on how to obtain a free vaccination. The website is part of a larger campaign to engage educators to help publicize the need for routine childhood vaccines and dangers of going without, including podcasts with leading experts speaking about the challenges and a bilingual back-to-school graphic campaign to help raise awareness among teachers and parents.

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About the Learning First Alliance

The Learning First Alliance is a partnership of leading education organizations with more than 10 million members dedicated to improving student learning in America's public schools. Alliance members include: American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education; AASA: The School Superintendents Association; American Federation of Teachers; American School Counselor Association; Consortium for School Networking; Learning Forward; National Association of Elementary School Principals; National Association of Secondary School Principals; National Education Association; National PTA; National School Boards Association and National School Public Relations Association.

To learn more about LFA, visit <http://www.learningfirst.org/>

