

DATE: January 18, 2022

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: Vice-Chair Nathan Ip

SUBJECT: Motion re: Advocacy for Equitable and Greater Access to COVID-19 Vaccinations for Children ages Five to 11

REFERENCE: [Trustees' Handbook – Section 5.2.2 – Notices of Motion](#)

ISSUE

Vice-Chair Ip served notice of motion at the December 14, 2021, Board meeting.

BACKGROUND

On November 26, 2021, Alberta Health Services (AHS) began administering pediatric doses of Pfizer-BioNTech (Comirnaty) COVID-19 vaccinations, previously approved by Health Canada. Today, more than seven weeks later, according to AHS statistics only 39 per cent of children between the ages of five and 12 living in Alberta have received a single COVID-19 vaccination, and far fewer, only 4.4 per cent, have had both doses.

Public Health authorities including the World Health Organization, Health Canada and Alberta Health Services continue to remind parents that vaccinations are safe and effective for children and adults. According to the Center for Disease Control, vaccinations are a safe way to build protection against COVID-19 and are the most effective tool available to protect communities and loved ones.

Paediatric COVID-19 vaccinations are currently being administered at AHS Public Health Centers in Edmonton. Many families face barriers to accessing immunization services due to issues with English language fluency, limited availability to transit and the lack of paid time off work among other challenges.

RATIONALE

Given the current rates of the Omicron variant in our province, its transmissibility and airborne nature, ensuring as many Albertans as possible are fully immunized is essential to protecting essential public services including our medical system and our schools by helping prevent potential disruptions caused by the possibility of high student and staff absences.

Alberta Health Services and Edmonton Public Schools have a long history of collaborating to provide safe, convenient, in-school clinics to deliver routine childhood vaccinations to thousands of children every year. Presently, COVID-19 immunizations for children ages 5-11 are only available by appointment and in select locations. The lack of access points can create hardship for families and households that may rely on public transportation or who may have difficulty taking time off work, among other structural barriers. Increased access to COVID-19 immunizations will support the health and safety of students, families, staff and the community.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Edmonton Public School Board write to the Premier, and the Ministers of Health and Education to advocate for equitable and greater access to COVID-19 vaccinations for children between the ages of five and 11, and call on the province to expand additional access points to families wishing to be vaccinated including:

1. Implementation of mobile vaccination clinics.
2. Offering voluntary in-school COVID-19 vaccination clinics in underserved areas, with the requirement of clear and documented parental consent.
3. Making pediatric COVID-19 vaccines available in pharmacies and doctors' offices in addition to Public Health Centers.

NEXT STEPS

A letter will be written on behalf of the Board to the Ministers of Health and Education and the Premier. This letter will be shared online using the Board's established process for the posting of correspondence.

ADDITIONAL READING**AHS stats on COVID-19**

<https://www.alberta.ca/stats/covid-19-alberta-statistics.htm>

Omicron impact on Health Care

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/health/omicron-testing-canada-cases-hospitalizations-po-1.6304195>

Vaccination rate for kids aged 5-11 remain low

<https://globalnews.ca/video/8502271/alberta-vaccination-rate-for-kids-aged-5-11-remain-low>

Health Canada

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/vaccination-children/covid-19.html>

CDC: Vaccine Benefits

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/vaccine-benefits.html>

Vaccine Efficacy and Safety for Children under 12

<https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/topics/page17746.aspx>

OPTIONS

1. Approve the recommendations.
2. Provide feedback and request changes to the recommendations for approval.

NEXT STEPS

Upon approval of the motion, the Board Chair would write to the Premier and the Ministers of Health and Education to advocate for equitable and greater access to COVID-19 vaccinations for children between the ages of five and 11.

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