



## DCJ Advice: COVID-19 Vaccinations for children and young people in out-of-home care

September 2021

### Why is the health of children and young people in out of home care particularly important during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Children and young people in care have increased physical, developmental, emotional and mental health needs compared to their peers in the general community.

These increased health needs make children and young people in out of home care vulnerable to the impacts of COVID-19. Being vaccinated significantly reduces the chance of severe COVID-19 disease and helps keep families and communities safe.

During this time it is particularly important that health practitioners, caseworkers and carers work together to ensure that the health needs of children and young people continue to be identified and addressed.

### How do I make an appointment for a vaccination?

Appointments can be booked through a General Practitioner (GP), Aboriginal Medical Service or a NSW Health Vaccination centre. To book a vaccination through the NSW Health Vaccination centre, go to [healthdirect.gov.au](https://healthdirect.gov.au) and complete the vaccine [eligibility](#) checker, and then proceed to make a booking.

Pfizer vaccine supplies may be limited in your local area so you might have to wait for an appointment. More vaccinations become available every day so keep checking availability.

The Therapeutic Goods Association (TGA) has provisionally approved the Moderna vaccine for use in people aged 12 years and over and it may be available in the near future. Please check the NSW Health website for the latest news on its rollout in NSW.

If you need more advice you can contact the child's GP to discuss any questions relating to their health and medical conditions.

### How can I get support through this process?

Your caseworker will support eligible children and young people to receive their vaccination. Talk to the child or young person's caseworker if you have any worries about getting the children in your care vaccinated. Your caseworker can support you when talking to the child about the vaccine, booking the appointment, and getting to the appointment if needed.

### Consent to the vaccine

If the child or young person is mature enough to make their own decisions regarding their medical treatment they can give their own consent to being vaccinated. In most instances this will be from 14 years old, but this should be assessed on an individual basis.

If you think that the child in your care is able to consent to the vaccine, talk to your medical practitioner. They will help determine if the child in your care has the capacity to consent to their own medical treatment, including a vaccination.

For children in out of home care who cannot consent to their own vaccine, carers and guardians can consent for them.

Please keep in mind, some NSW Health vaccine services may require people under 16 years of age to be accompanied by a carer or guardian to the appointment to provide consent. There is work being done to arrange consent online. In the meantime, carers may attend appointments with children to assist in providing consent. Carers and caseworkers must respect the wishes of children with the capacity to consent.



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### What if the child in my care does not consent?

Talk to the child or young person in your care about the vaccine and what will happen during the vaccination procedure. Talk about the vaccination in a way the child or young person can understand. Let them know that a vaccine is a type of medicine that helps people fight a virus if they come in contact with it and it can stop people from getting sick from the virus. You cannot make a child or young person take a vaccine, but you can do your best to talk through any worries they may have.

### What if the child I am caring for has a chronic health condition?

All children and young people in statutory out-of-home care receive a Health Management Plan which records the assessments that they have received and the health services that they require. The Health Management Plan should be followed as much as possible during the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure that children and young people's health needs are met.

Children and young people with chronic health conditions such as diabetes, asthma, heart abnormalities or malnutrition and also those with compromised immune systems are at more risk of being affected by COVID-19 than others.

You can obtain advice from the [Out-of-Home Care Health Coordinator](#) or from individual health practitioners about the way that specific health services are provided during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### I have other children in the household, are they eligible?

Other children in your care and other members of your household may be eligible too. From 13 September, all children 12 and over will be eligible for a vaccine. You may want to consider getting yourself and members of your household vaccinated together.

### For more information on the vaccine:

Contact the child's GP to discuss administration of the vaccine and vaccine related information. If you want to discuss any other concerns, please contact your caseworker.

The Australian Government has doubled the bulk billing incentive for GPs for face-to-face and telehealth services in response to COVID-19. More information about this is available on the [Australian Government Department of Health website](#). This will help to ensure that children and young people are provided with free, timely and appropriate access to essential primary health services.

### Useful links

- [Health vaccine 'Is it true?' FAQ page](#)
- [NSW Health information on vaccine safety, side effects and efficacy](#)
- [NSW Health vaccine information in diverse languages](#)