

Protecting Head Start Children Through Staff Vaccination

Dr. Bernadine Futrell: Hello, Head Start. This is Dr. Futrell, director of the Office of Head Start. I'm coming to you tonight with this special video to share with you an important announcement from President Joe Biden earlier today concerning the health and safety of America's children and families.

Earlier today, the president announced a new requirement for the Head Start program that includes vaccine against COVID-19 as a requirement for every Head Start employee. This decision and this step is necessary as we work together to build back out of this pandemic. These last 19 months have been difficult, and we have navigated with strength. I am grateful and thankful to each and every one of you – the Head Start workforce – for your leadership, for your commitment, and the work that you do every single day to support children and families.

Health and safety has always been a core component of the Head Start program. We work with children and families, not only to ensure that families have access to resources and services, but also relationships, by making sure there is a medical and dental home. Taking this step around getting vaccinated for the Head Start workforce is another level to make sure that children and families and our workforce remains safe.

Beginning in January 2022, when we open our doors fully for in-person services, having the vaccine for our workforce is a key component that will build us back to stronger, more vibrant opportunities ahead for the children and families and our Head Start workforce. The vaccines are safe and effective at not only preventing deaths and severe diseases, but keeping those around you safe. And because our Head Start children are not yet eligible for the vaccine, it is so important that we do all that we can to ensure that those who work and partner with families are fully vaccinated, and the environments where our children and our Head Start workforce enter every single day are safe and healthy.

I want to thank you in advance Head Start for making this commitment, for answering the call, as we continue to monitor the national and local trends of this pandemic. We will build out of this together, and together we will move Head Start forward. Thank you.