

Dr. Dorothy Bendross-Mindingall, Board Member

**SUBJECT: PRIORITIZING COVID-19 VACCINATION FOR TEACHERS AND ALL SCHOOL PERSONNEL AT MIAMI-DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS (MDCPS)**

**COMMITTEE: PERSONNEL, STUDENT, SCHOOL & COMMUNITY SUPPORT**

**LINK TO STRATEGIC BLUEPRINT: HIGHLY EFFECTIVE TEACHERS, LEADERS AND STAFF**

As Miami-Dade County Public Schools continues to transition back to in-person instruction for some (giving parents a choice between face to face instruction and virtual learning from home), making sure that the health and safety of all students, teachers, and personnel is paramount.

On March 30, 2020, Governor Ron DeSantis issued Executive Order Number 20-91 (Essential Services and Activities During COVID-19 Emergency), wherein he includes the definition of “essential services” set forth in a list by the United States Department of Homeland Security’s *Guidance on Essential Critical Infrastructure Workforce*, v. 2 (March 28, 2020). The Executive Order also referenced those businesses and activities set forth on a list “propounded by Miami-Dade County in multiple (Executive) orders” and “other essential services as may be added under this Order with approval of the State Coordinating Officer.” Pursuant to these Executive Orders, workers who provide these essential services have been deemed to be essential service workers and have been given certain priority in terms of certain subsequent executive orders related to public safety during the pandemic.

On December 11, 2020, the Food and Drug Administration (“FDA”) issued its Emergency Use Authorization for a Covid-19 vaccine produced by Pfizer BioNTech (“Pfizer”). This authorization is expected to be followed by the approval of Covid-19 vaccines from at least two other vaccine manufacturers. Subsequently, the Florida Department of Health developed and received approval of its COVID-19 Vaccination Plan in accordance with the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (“CDC”) instructions and guidance, as well as prior lessons learned in addressing other communicable diseases. Following approval, Florida plans to utilize an integrated planning structure to receive and administer approximately 179,400 doses of the Pfizer vaccines and another 367,000 doses of a vaccine produced by Moderna Therapeutics (“Moderna”) next week, pending Emergency Use Authorization by the FDA. It is anticipated that doses of the Moderna vaccine will be distributed to 173 hospital locations that did not receive doses in the first allocation of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine. These hospital locations span 43 counties.

In accordance with the plan, a modified Incident Command Structure was established for the Florida Department of Health’s COVID-19 vaccination initiative, that includes experts selected for their expertise in a number of health and medical disciplines, including medical countermeasures, immunizations, epidemiology, medical surge, EMS, incident management, communications, legal, regulation of health care facilities and county health department (CHD) operations and management. This workgroup has established subgroups to complete key tasks associated with vaccination activities, to focus vaccine administration in the specific areas of “hospitals, long-term care facilities, first responders, critical infrastructure personnel, CHD Mass Vaccination Clinics, State Mass Vaccination Clinics and expanded traditional vaccine providers and retail providers.

The planning team has also focused on expanding the Health Department's immunization program to address key tasks related to enrollment of new vaccine providers; expansion of Vaccines for Children (VFC) and Vaccines for Adults (VFA) programs; and readiness of Florida's Immunization Information System (IIS), Florida SHOTS.

The workgroup behind the Covid-19 Vaccination Initiative has engaged a variety of internal and external partners regarding COVID-19 vaccine planning through both established public health partnerships and the State Emergency Operations Center, which is currently activated at a Level 1 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Activities related to specific target groups include pharmacies, correctional and detention facilities, homeless shelters, community-based organizations, long-term care facilities, public safety agencies, and hospitals. Public schools are not included in this list of partnerships in the Plan, despite the fact that public school personnel must interact with the public daily in order to provide brick-and-mortar instruction as required by the State's Executive Orders related to the Reopening of Schools. Schools can also be a resource for communities to administer vaccines, given their strategic locations throughout the community.

In Section 3 of the Florida COVID-19 Vaccination Plan, it is stated that "(t)he goal of the Florida COVID-19 Vaccination Plan is to develop and update, as needed, a plan for vaccinations as guidance is provided by the CDC. Prioritization of vaccine recipients is not yet determined by the CDC. Priority groups may vary based on the vaccine that is ultimately approved, vaccine availability and the groups it is authorized for. Based upon current federal guidance, it is expected that initial priority groups will include health care personnel, essential workers, persons with medical conditions that place them at high-risk for COVID-19 complications, and older adults (≥65 years of age)."

Florida will implement a phased vaccine administration strategy over the various phases outlined by the CDC's *COVID-19 Vaccination Program Interim Playbook for Jurisdiction Operations*. Initially, vaccine may be provided through a closed point of dispensing (POD) model targeting priority groups. Pro-rata allocations will be made to vaccine administration sites that can adequately store, manage and administer the vaccine. The sites will be responsible for vaccinating individuals within the established priority groups as instructed by the CDC.

In addition, the Learning First Alliance (a group that includes AASA, the School Superintendents Association, the American Federation of Teachers, the American School Counselor Association CoSN - Consortium for School Networking Learning Forward, the National Association of Elementary School Principals, the National Association of Secondary Principals, the National Education Association, the National PTA, the National School Boards Association, and the National School Public Relations Association) sent a letter on November 30, 2020, advocating for the CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices statement about the importance of giving adults in the school system priority access to vaccinations, and how that is not only "critical to meet that goal and the goal of generating trust in the vaccination program," but that it is also critical in emphasizing "the importance of fully re-opening our school buildings, safely, for in-person instruction. . ." to include teachers, specialist instructional support personnel, aides, food service and custodial workers, and principals, as a priority group for administration of the vaccines for the suppression of Covid-19.

Public schools have been struggling to bring students back into the classroom and, in many places, school buildings have had to shut down again as Covid-19 has ravaged our communities, infecting over one million children. The alliance pointed out how these shutdowns profoundly affect our families as well as our local economies. If school personnel could be vaccinated early in the process, "school buildings could even serve as vaccination centers for the general public, as schools are a centerpiece of almost every community and served important roles during the mass polio vaccinations. This could help a vaccination program reach its goals more quickly and effectively."

Now that a vaccine for COVID-19 has been approved, the Governor's plan is to have prioritized health care providers, employees at long term care facilities and other certain essential workers to receive the vaccine first. More vaccine will be allocated and distributed, and other groups are expected to be added as more vaccine is available. Although teachers and all school personnel are not included in the initial distribution plan, school-based personnel are essential workers given their daily interaction with the public, and should therefore be considered as a priority for the COVID-19 vaccine.

As more vaccine becomes available, traditional health care providers, including pediatricians, primary care providers and pharmacies will receive doses. It is likely that in this phase, the CHDs will open Public Mass Vaccination Clinics, and the Department and/or Florida's Division of Emergency Management might open such clinics to ensure there is equitable distribution of the vaccine, in the same way COVID-19 testing was made available.

The goal of the Florida Department of Education and the Board is to return to some type of normalcy and get all our students and personnel back to brick-and-mortar safely. The community, State, Nation, and world have experienced uncertainty and unpredictability this past year, (social distancing, wearing a mask, shutdowns, and quarantine to name a few). Those social adjustments have taken their toll on all of us with teachers and school personnel on the frontlines. As stated by Superintendent Alberto Carvalho in his letter to Governor DeSantis and Surgeon General Rivkees, M.D., "as Florida begins to receive its allocation of COVID-19 vaccines, we respectfully request that personnel with direct student contact be considered among the highest priority vaccine recipients." This is one reason why we need to explore the feasibility of teachers, and all school-based personnel being designated a priority to receive the COVID-19 vaccine, because they too are essential frontline workers for our kids.

This item seeks to authorize the Superintendent to advocate to various entities, including the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices Center for Disease Control and Prevention, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the Florida Department of Health, including the Surgeon General and the COVID-19 Vaccination Planning Workgroup, as well as Miami-Dade County and other local authorities to specifically include school personnel, including teachers, specialist instructional support personnel, aides, food service and custodial workers, and principals—as a priority group for administration of the vaccines for the suppression of Covid-19. This item also authorizes the Superintendent to explore the feasibility of utilizing schools as a resource for providers to administer the COVID-19 vaccine. In addition, this item authorizes the Superintendent to report back to the Board by the March 10, 2021 at the Personnel, Student, School & Community Support Committee meeting regarding his efforts related to this item.

This item has been reviewed and approved as to form and legal sufficiency by the School Board Attorney.

**ACTION PROPOSED BY DR. DOROTHY BENDROSS-MINDINGALL:**

That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, authorize the Superintendent to:

1. advocate to the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices Center for Disease Control and Prevention, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, to specifically include school personnel, including teachers, specialist instructional support personnel, aides, food service and custodial workers, and principals, as a priority group for administration of the vaccines for the suppression of Covid-19;
2. advocate to the Florida Department of Health, including the Surgeon General and the COVID-19 Vaccination Planning Workgroup to include school personnel as a priority group for administration of the vaccines for the suppression of Covid-19.
3. advocate to Miami-Dade County and other local authorities to include school personnel as a priority group for administration of the vaccines for the suppression of Covid-19,
4. Explore the feasibility of utilizing schools as a resource for providers to administer the COVID-19 vaccine;  
and
5. report back to the Board by the March 10, 2021 at the Personnel, Student, School & Community Support Committee meeting.