

Prioritizing Early Childhood Educators for the COVID-19 Vaccine Funders Discussion Highlights & Related Resources

On February 4th, ECFC hosted a discussion with the [National Association for the Education of Young Children](#), [Child Care Aware of America](#), and [National Association of Family Child Care](#) to discuss national efforts to prioritize early childhood educators and child care workers for the COVID vaccine, and opportunities for philanthropy to support these efforts in their communities.

Key Challenges

Among the key challenges we discussed around prioritizing and ensuring access to the vaccine for early educators/child care providers:

- Lack of specific guidance vaccination plans for the early education and child care sector, and each state is responsible for determining its plan.
- It's often not clear if definitions of "child care providers" include all delivery settings (such as Child Care Resource & Referral agencies; licensed and unlicensed exempt care; family, friend and neighbor care).
- The fundamental logistics of the vaccine process are daunting – hours on the phone or online to register for a vaccine, distance and transportation to vaccination sites, standing in line for hours for the vaccination. For home and family based child care providers time and access challenge are especially challenging, as they may be the sole provider at their site.
- The time needed to navigate the vaccine process, or feeling ill after receiving the vaccine, could mean lost wages if they can't find a substitute or can't work or have to close their program on some days, and this could also mean lost wages for the families they serve in absence of child care.

Roles for Philanthropy: Connect and Support Trusted Partners and “Navigators”

Place-based funders are already deep in their communities, with relationships with intermediaries and key partners. Funders can help find and connect trusted partners and messengers to help “navigate” community needs, deliver messaging, and assist child care providers through the vaccine process.

Trusted partners in the community that could serve as Navigators (and/or help navigators support specialized needs of child care providers), might include;

- Health care partners (American Academy of Pediatrics Chapters, Black doctors, hospitals, clinics, community health workers);
- Community partners who can provide translation/language assistance;
- Religious leaders, civic organizations and other community hubs; and
- Programs already serving child care providers, such as food sponsor programs.

Given the heavy technological requirement for vaccine registration and distribution, lack of consistent guidance, and lack of clarity around definitions of child care in vaccine plans, the **role of a navigator** could involve many things to meet individual child care provider needs, such as:

- Providing trusted messaging about the COVID-19 vaccine (and possibly making connections with health care partners around basic vaccine information).
- Helping determine eligibility
- Assisting with access issues (registration, finding vaccine locations, transportation)
- Assisting with translation/language barriers
- Helping navigate unintended consequences such as finding substitutes to avoid closing, and fees associated the free vaccine (e.g. office visits)

Philanthropy has always been a connector and convener in their communities, and can help make connections now to help organizations, advocates and other partners in community support child care providers to navigate challenges and barriers of getting the vaccine.

Learn More:

State Plans and Guidance:

On March 2, [President Biden directed](#) states to prioritize child care and K-12 staff for vaccination. He is challenging states to provide at least the first vaccine dose to both sectors by the end of March. Pharmacy locations that are part of the [Federal Retail Pharmacy Program](#) are now giving priority to child care workers throughout March.

[Child Care Aware of America](#) is tracking real time state vaccinations plans and if/how child care workers are being included. They have developed a [2page fact sheet overview](#) with basics about the vaccine, and have a video story hub for child care providers to share their [COVID-19 Impact Stories](#).

Additional state plan tracking:

- [Kaiser Family Foundation](#) – [State COVID-19 Vaccination Plans Priority Populations](#) (searchable by state and distribution phase)
- [National Academy for State Health Policy](#) – [State COVID-19 Vaccination Plans](#) (searchable by Essential Workers and Vulnerable Populations)

Guidance & Messaging

- CDC released a [COVID-19 Vaccine Toolkit for School Settings and Child Care Programs](#) that provides information, materials and ideas to get the word out about the vaccine availability to child care staff. The toolkit includes printable/some customizable promotional materials (posters, fact sheets, stickers).
- [Homegrown and the National Association for Family Child Care](#) have developed a social media toolkit for messaging cohesive messaging for provider advocates and their networks to reach out to state policymakers about home-based child care provider access to COVID-19 vaccine.
- [Black Coalition Against COVID-19](#) created “[The Conversation: Between Us, About Us](#)” Campaign, including 50 FAQ videos by Black doctors, nurses, and researchers to dispel misinformation about the vaccine, facilitated by stand-up comedian W. Kamau Bell.

- [Child Care Resource & Referral \(CCR&R\) agencies are equipped to coordinate with states to provide outreach and response to the child care community so providers know when and where vaccines are available to them.](#)
- [How States Can Spend \\$10 Billion for Child Care Well, Wisely & With Urgency.](#) NAEYC, EducationCounsel and CLASP (January 27, 2021), one idea presented is to provide funds for child care providers for paid leave and other expenses associated with vaccine plans.

Roles for Philanthropy: Support the Advocacy Infrastructure

We also discussed the value of an advocacy infrastructure to mobilize around prioritizing early childhood educators and parity with K-12 educators for the vaccine has been critical in some places. One national partner noted that “It made a tremendous difference that the DC and OH funding communities having invested in advocacy over the past several years, building the advocacy infrastructure, and having that relationships they needed at the moment they needed it. Funders had already put money where it needed to go to build those relationships and activate them in response to this real challenge.”

- For example, in DC, early childhood educators were at the top of the priority list, then suddenly were bumped down behind K-12 educators. The DC Advocacy community acted quickly to put pressure on those responsible for the vaccination plan to prioritize EC educators with K-12 educators. (See: DC Action for Kids, [Open Letter to OSSE Requesting Easier Access to Vaccine for Early Childhood Educators](#)).
- Similar actions in Ohio led to outrage by the advocacy community, and resulted in K-12 educators and teachers unions speaking out for their EC colleagues. (See [Video message from Ohio AEYC and stakeholders](#) requesting Governor DeWine and his administration prioritize the child care workforce for the voluntary COVID-19 vaccine).

Learn more:

- If not already, connect with your [state NAEYC affiliate](#) to learn more about how they are involved with prioritizing EC educators for the vaccine.
- Learn more about essential advocacy infrastructure needed to achieve ambitious policy goals for children and families and how funders must invest to achieve concrete public policy victories: [Building the Advocacy Infrastructure to Win Equity Victories for Children and Families](#), a new Capita report by Sara Watson, Senior Consultant to the Bainum Family Foundation, and Kim Perry of DC Action for Kids.



Watch our February 4th Discussion with National Partners

Prioritizing Early Childhood Educators for the COVID-19 Vaccine, March 2021