



TO: Interested Parties
FROM: United States of Care
SUBJECT: Research Memo: COVID-19 vaccine interest and questions among parents
DATE: July 7, 2021

Recently, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved an emergency use authorization for the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccines for adolescents 12 years of age and older. This is a critical step toward protecting our families and moving the United States closer to broad immunity.

For many parents, it has been a straightforward decision to vaccinate their child and the data show that if a parent has been vaccinated themselves, they are more likely to do the same for their child. However, as we have seen play out across other demographics, some parents still have questions or concerns about vaccine side effects in children. Here again, the data make the case for messaging that relays the basic facts about vaccines and encourages parents to seek guidance from their family physicians.

Key takeaways detailed in this memo:

- The data reiterate that the most effective messengers for adults — those making decisions for themselves or their children — continues to be their family doctors. Hart Research data commissioned by the AdCouncil found that 83% of parents trust their pediatrician’s recommendation on vaccines.
- Advocates should encourage parents to talk with their child’s pediatrician, which in some cases may have the [dual benefit](#) of leading both parent and child to get vaccinated.
- Kaiser Family Foundation’s May COVID-19 Monitor found that parents who have been vaccinated are more likely to vaccinate their children against COVID-19.
- de Beaumont Foundation polling found that 71% of parents would get their child vaccinated if it would speed the return to “normal” in-person schooling without restrictions.

About this document: This memo highlights some of the latest research from our partners in the Vaccine Hesitancy Research Consortium on parents and their views on vaccinating their children. It was created by assembling studies and polling results conducted over the past three months, interviewing researchers, and interpreting their findings. The analysis and resulting messaging recommendations in this document can form the baseline for how we, as health and vaccine advocates, engage in the effort to address people’s concerns and help the country reach maximum vaccination levels.

Current trends and enthusiasm:

The [May COVID-19 Vaccine Monitor](#) survey from the Kaiser Family Foundation included data on parents of adolescents 12-17 years old. Among those parents, 41% reported their child had received at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine or they planned to get their child vaccinated

right away. A further 21% said they would “wait a while to see how it is working” before getting their child vaccinated; 14% said they would do so only if required by their child’s school.

This data shows a 20% jump in parents who report their child has already received one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. This uptake is likely driven by an initial and encouraging surge following the expansion of vaccine eligibility to include children 12-15.

Parents of children under the age of 12, for whom no COVID-19 vaccine has been authorized, exhibit more caution with only 26% saying they would get their child vaccinated once eligible. KFF found that a parent’s own vaccination status is an indicator of what they would likely do for their own children. Among parents who have been vaccinated themselves, 46% would get their children under the age of 12 vaccinated as soon as a vaccine is authorized. This contrasts the 42% of unvaccinated parents who say they will “definitely not” vaccinate their child under the age of 12.

Understanding hesitancy and concerns:

Understandably, parents have some questions and concerns about the vaccine that are similar to those we have seen across other demographic audiences. The KFF May monitor found that among parents:

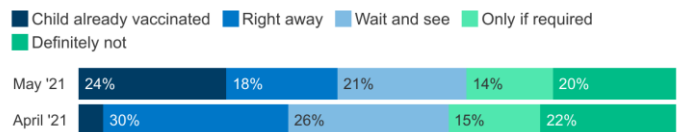
- One in five had questions about the vaccines side effects or negative vaccine reactions.
- Ten percent had questions about the long-term side effects of the vaccine.
- Six percent wanted to know more about the research done on children.
- Five percent had questions about vaccine safety.

A [recent survey from the de Beaumont Foundation](#) (dBF) reported parents are almost evenly divided on the rewards and risks surrounding the vaccines with a small majority (53%) **agreeing that “the reward of protection from COVID-19 outweighs the potential risk of the vaccine for my child.”** This compares to 47% of parents who felt that “the risk of the vaccine outweighs the potential reward of protection of COVID-19 for my child.

Figure 8

Four In Ten Parents Say Their Adolescent Has Already Received A COVID-19 Vaccine Or Will Do So Right Away

As you may know, the FDA recently authorized the use of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine for use in children ages 12 and up. Thinking about your child or children between the ages of 12-17, do you think you will...?



NOTE: Among parents or guardians of children ages 12-17. April 2021 question wording: “Once there is a COVID-19 vaccine authorized and available for your child’s age group, do you think you will...?” See [topline](#) for full question wording.

SOURCE: KFF COVID-19 Vaccine Monitor (May 18-25, 2021)

[KFF COVID-19 Vaccine Monitor](#)

Significantly, the dBF survey found that **71% of parents would get their child vaccinated if it would speed the return to “normal” in-person schooling without restrictions.** This includes 59% of Republican voters.

“Parents are more reluctant about getting their children vaccinated than they are about getting the vaccine themselves, but they are also eager to get their children back to school without restrictions.”

- Frank Luntz, dBF pollster

The KFF May Monitor report concluded with an important note that puts parents’ questions and concerns in context, stating that they “don’t necessarily reflect a resistance among parents to vaccines more broadly. Just 11% of parents say they have ever delayed or skipped other vaccines for their children.”

Messaging to meet parents where they are:

Across all the data on parents and their intentions to vaccinate their children, it is clear this audience remains conflicted and are looking for assurances and “Peace of Mind.” [Research conducted by Hart Research](#) for the AdCouncil affirms that family doctors remain the most trusted sources regarding vaccinations and fact-based messages resonate strongly with parents.

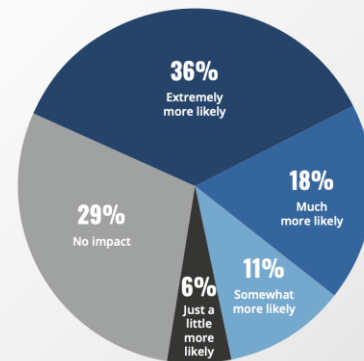
- 83% of parents trust their child’s pediatrician or doctor’s recommendation about vaccinating their children.
- 77% say they are more likely to vaccinate their children after hearing from top scientists and physicians that COVID vaccines are 100% effective in children.
- 76% say they are more likely to vaccinate their children after hearing from top scientists and physicians that COVID vaccines are safe for children.
- 76% of parents would be more likely to vaccinate their children after hearing from a doctor about the vaccine development, approval, and testing process.

Additionally, dBF’s research pointed to four arguments that parents stated were the most convincing and compelling for why they should vaccinate their child:

- Vaccinating children can help the country reach broad immunity and can protect children from the mental and physical effects of lockdowns and other restrictions.
- Parents can protect their children from needing hospitalization or have lasting COVID-19 symptoms. There are documented deaths in children due to COVID-19, and the long-term impact of the virus remains unknown.
- Medical science has proven that other vaccines keep dangerous diseases and viruses away from our children. The COVID-19 vaccine is no different.

71% of parents say a return to school without restrictions would make them more likely to get their child vaccinated

If a COVID vaccination meant that your child could return to school in person with no masks or social distancing, how would that affect your decision?



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- Vaccinated children can go back to school — in person and without masks — to get the education they want, need, and deserve.

Parents, like populations who express strong vaccine hesitancy, are not monolithic and they are weighing important concerns when it comes to making a decision to vaccinate their children. The clearest path forward is to provide parents with the basic facts and encourage them to seek guidance from their family doctors.

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Appendix: Research from the Vaccine Hesitancy Research Consortium

Recent data and polling resources since April 2021 are linked below:

- **Kaiser Family Foundation:** [COVID-19 Vaccine Monitor: May 2021](#)
 - Methodology: The survey was conducted May 18-May 25, 2021, among a nationally representative random digit dial telephone sample of 1,526 adults ages 18 and older (including interviews from 327 Hispanic adults and 307 non-Hispanic Black adults), living in the United States, including Alaska and Hawaii (note: persons without a telephone could not be included in the random selection process).
- **de Beaumont Foundation:** [POLL: PARENTS OF TEENAGERS EXPRESS DOUBT ABOUT VACCINE SAFETY, BUT SAY ‘NORMAL’ RETURN TO SCHOOL WOULD BE COMPELLING](#)
 - Methodology: Pollster Frank Luntz conducted a national survey of parents to explore their likelihood of getting their teenage (or 12-year-old) children vaccinated for COVID-19, and to identify the most effective messages. The survey was conducted May 17-21, 2021, with 800 interviews and an additional 300 oversample of Black Americans and Latino parents. The demographic weights reflect U.S. Department of Education statistics on the nation’s parent population, including gender, age, ethnicity, public/private school enrollment, income, education level, and several other variables.
- **AdCouncil:** [COVID-19 Vaccine Campaign Insights Briefing](#)
 - Briefing shared insights from Ad Council/COVID Collaborative’s latest nationwide polls. Methodology for the most recent referenced poll is below:
 - [Parents’ Views On Having Children Vaccinated Against Covid-19](#)
 - Fielded April 17 to 27, 2021 At the time of fielding, only the Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine had been authorized for use in people age 16 and older. Nationwide online survey among 1,603 parents/ primary caretakers of children under 18. Including 404 Latinx parents, 315 Black parents, and 259 Asian American/Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander parents (These groups were oversampled, and the survey was weighted to demographically represent U.S. parents overall.)