



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 21, 2021

Wolf Administration visits Whitaker Center to Discuss COVID-19 Safety Tips for Children Not Yet Eligible to Receive COVID-19 Vaccine and their Families

Harrisburg, PA – Department of Human Services (DHS) Acting Secretary Meg Snead and Acting Physician General Dr. Denise Johnson visited the Whitaker Center in Harrisburg today to discuss recommendations to keep children and their families safe while children under the age of 12 are not yet eligible for a COVID-19 vaccine.

“While the statewide mask guidance has been lifted, it’s important that we continue to take steps to keep ourselves, our children, our friends and family safe. I urge everybody to get vaccinated and to follow CDC guidance so we can gather together safely,” said Acting Secretary Snead. “We must remain vigilant and continue working together to prevent further spread of COVID-19 between children and families.”

“COVID-19 vaccines are the best tools we have to protect against COVID-19 and any variants of the virus,” Acting Physician General Dr. Denise Johnson said. “Vaccines are also a way to protect those who cannot get the vaccine yet, such as children under the age of 12. We’re encouraging everyone, especially parents of young children, to consider getting vaccinated. We have the power to stop the spread of this virus and keep ourselves, our children, friends and family safe by getting vaccinated.”

“As Whitaker Center continues to be open, it is very important to us that friends and family are attentive to protecting children from COVID-19 as young children cannot be vaccinated. We are so pleased to welcome Acting DHS Secretary Snead and Acting Physician General Dr. Johnson to Whitaker Center,” said Meghan Clark, Chief Operating Officer and VP of Finance of the Whitaker Center. “Children’s safety is our top priority, and we have a very busy summer taking place with many children attending summer camps, as well as having our Harsco Science Center and Select Medical Digital Cinema open to the public. Due to being a children’s museum, we are strongly encouraging all guests to continue to wear masks when visiting to set an example for the children to continue to wear masks. All of our summer campers are also strongly encouraged to wear masks throughout the day, and we are pleased to see guardians at the drop off in the morning encourage this for their young ones. Our most important objective is for families to feel safe when they are visiting and to provide families with a fun experience while being safe. We continue to maintain very intensive cleaning procedures throughout the day and suggest families purchase their tickets in advance. We encourage families to allow their children to re-engage in the world and visit us at Whitaker Center where you can discover it all!”

DHS and its Office of Child Development and Early Learning, or OCDEL, along with the Department of Health, follow guidance from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The CDC recommends that children under the age of 2 should not wear face coverings.

Children between the ages of 2 and 12 and older children who are not yet vaccinated, however, are strongly encouraged to continue wearing face coverings in public settings, at events and gatherings, and anywhere indoors when they will be around other people outside of their household.

If a child is unable to wear a face covering, the CDC recommends more low-risk activities, such as enjoying activities outdoors with members of their household or attending a small, outdoor gathering with fully vaccinated family and friends. Risk of COVID-19 infection increases if unvaccinated children gather from multiple households; therefore, the safest place to visit is outdoors. Children with underlying medical conditions, regardless of age, may also be at increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19 compared to other children, so continued use of face coverings are encouraged to help protect unvaccinated children.

Indoor activities can occur so long as all people involved take safety precautions, including wearing a face covering that fits snugly, staying distanced from others, and visiting in a well-ventilated space. This includes visiting with fully vaccinated grandparents without wearing face coverings or physical distancing, provided none of the unvaccinated family members are at risk of severe COVID-19.

These precautions, regardless of a child's age or vaccination status, should be applied along with:

- Washing your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds;
- Making sure your child covers their mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing;
- Staying home if you are unvaccinated and sick with, tested positive for, or were recently (within 14 days) exposed to COVID-19; and,
- Continuing routine doctor appointments and vaccine visits.

Any person, regardless of vaccination status, experiencing new or unexplained symptoms of COVID-19 still needs to isolate and be evaluated for COVID-19. Children 12 or older and adults who have not yet received their COVID-19 vaccine are strongly encouraged to get vaccinated as soon as possible to protect themselves and their loved ones.

More current COVID-19 guidelines information can be found at www.health.pa.gov.

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