



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 10, 2021

Department of Education Visits Wilkes-Barre to Highlight Importance of COVID-19 Vaccination Clinics, Congratulate CTC Student for Receiving International Award

Wilkes-Barre, PA – Today, Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) Secretary Dr. Noe Ortega and Special Advisor to the Secretary Dr. David Volkman joined Wilkes-Barre Area School District students, educators, and community partners to tour their new high school and discuss the importance of layered health and safety mitigation strategies, including getting the COVID-19 vaccine. Secretary Ortega and Special Advisor Volkman also commended the Wilkes-Barre Area School District for holding a COVID-19 vaccination clinic to provide Wilkes-Barre Area students, ages 12 and up, with the Pfizer vaccine.

“I am grateful to our school communities for continuing to prioritize health and safety, so teaching and learning can continue in-person at school,” Ortega said. “COVID-19 vaccination clinics, like the one at Kistler Elementary School in the Wilkes-Barre Area School District today, help us decrease the spread of COVID-19 and keep classrooms open.”

In August, the Pennsylvania Department of Health (DOH) directed vaccine providers to support COVID-19 vaccination clinics at K-12 schools and institutions of higher education. Additionally, the departments of Health and Education are partnering with Concentric by Ginkgo Bioworks to provide free COVID-19 testing in K-12 schools across the commonwealth to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 and outbreaks in schools during the 2021-22 school year.

The DOH is working to ensure the vaccine is provided in a way that is ethical, equitable, and efficient to all Pennsylvanians:

- All Pennsylvanians aged 12 and older are eligible to get a COVID-19 vaccine. Use [Vaccine Finder](#) to find a COVID-19 vaccine provider near you.
- Text your zip code to GETVAX (438829) for English, or VACUNA (822862) for Spanish and receive three possible COVID vaccination sites in your area, with phone numbers to call for an appointment.
- A [commonwealth COVID-19 vaccination guide](#) explains the current process for getting one. Pennsylvanians with questions about the vaccination process can call the Department of Health hotline at 1-877-724-3258.
- [Vaccine dashboard data](#) can also be found on the website to find more information on the doses administered and showcase demographic information.
- The [Unite Against COVID Weekly Update](#) is a round-up of news you can use and answers to your most pressing vaccine questions – delivered directly to your inbox every week.
- [Access answers to frequently asked questions on the COVID-19 vaccine.](#)

PDE also visited the Wilkes-Barre Area Career and Technical Center (WBACTC) to meet and congratulate Health Occupation Students of America (HOSA) 2021 Virtual International Leadership Conference winner Victoria Thomas, a senior at Crestwood High School who attends the CTC.

The mission of WBACTC, in partnership with its sponsoring districts, is to provide a high quality, competency-based education to its students who, upon graduation, can become responsible citizens, critical thinkers, and successful completers in a world-wide economy and possess the skills to be life-long learners. There are currently 25 programs offered at WBACTC including childcare, auto mechanics, and health assistance.

“I am delighted to congratulate Victoria Thomas on her outstanding academic accomplishment as the recipient of the Health Occupation Students of America (HOSA) 2021 Virtual International Leadership Conference award,” Ortega said. “We know, more than ever, how important the field of healthcare is and the impact it makes locally, nationally, and globally. I look forward to recognizing future students, like Victoria, who do incredible things while pursuing a career and technical education in Pennsylvania.”

Transformed from vo-tech of the past, [Pennsylvania's career and technical education centers \(CTC\)](#) offer dynamic, state-approved programs that lead to the development of real-world, in-demand skills as well as industry-recognized credentials and certifications. CTE in Pennsylvania offers high school students the opportunity to develop critical skills through a combination of challenging academic opportunities and hands-on learning experiences. Students must apply to enroll in a career and technical education center.

The Wolf administration's PAsmart initiative is investing tens of millions of dollars in skills training at CTC, apprenticeships, and other programs to prepare Pennsylvanians for in-demand jobs in fast-growing industries.

For more information about Pennsylvania's education policies and programs, including CTE, please visit the Department of Education's website at www.education.pa.gov or follow PDE on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), or [Pinterest](#).

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