

# White House details plans to vaccinate children ages 5-11

By ZEKE MILLER

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Children age 5 to 11 will soon be able to get a COVID-19 shot at their pediatrician's office, local pharmacy and potentially even their school, the White House said Wednesday, Oct. 20 as it detailed plans for the expected authorization of the Pfizer shot for younger children in a matter of weeks.

Federal regulators will meet over the next two weeks to weigh the benefits of giving shots to kids, after lengthy studies meant to ensure the safety of the vaccines.

Within hours of formal approval, expected after the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention advisory meeting scheduled for Nov. 2-3, doses will begin shipping to providers across the country, along with smaller needles necessary for injecting young kids, and within days will be ready to go into the arms of kids on a wide scale.

"We're completing the operational planning to ensure vaccinations for kids ages 5-11 are available, easy and convenient," said White House COVID-19 coordinator Jeff Zients on Wednesday.

The Biden administration notes the nationwide campaign to extend the protection of vaccination to the school-going cohort will not look like the start of the country's vaccine rollout 10 months ago, when scarcity of doses and capacity issues meant a painstaking wait for many Americans. The country now has ample supplies of the Pfizer shot to vaccinate the roughly 28 million kids who will soon be eligible, White House officials said, and have been working for months to ensure widespread availability of shots once approved.

More than 25,000 pediatricians and primary care providers have already signed on to administer COVID-19 vaccine shots to kids, the White House said, in addition to the tens of thousands of retail pharmacies that are already administering shots to adults. Hundreds of school- and community-based clinics will also be funded and supported by the Federal Emergency Management Agency to help speed putting shots into arms.

The White House is also preparing to mobilize a stepped-up campaign to educate parents and kids about the safety of the shots and



Aristide Economopoulos/NJ Adva-TNS

A teenager from Glen Rock in Bergen County, New Jersey, gets a coronavirus vaccine at Hackensack University Medical Center. Federal officials are preparing to roll out the Pfizer vaccine for children ages 5 to 11.

the ease of getting them. As has been the case for adult vaccinations, the administration believes trusted messengers — educators, doctors, and community leaders — will be vital to encouraging vaccinations.

While children are at lower risk than older people of having serious side effects from COVID-19, those serious consequences do occur — and officials note that vaccination both dramatically reduces

those chances and will reduce the spread of the more transmissible delta variant in communities, contributing to the nation's broader recovery from the pandemic.

"COVID has also disrupted our kids lives. It's made school harder, it's disrupted their ability to see friends and family, it's made youth sports more challenging," U.S. surgeon general Dr. Vivek Murthy told NBC on Wednesday. "Getting our kids vac-

inated, we have the prospect of protecting them, but also getting all of those activities back that are so important to our children."

Murthy said the administration, which is promoting employer vaccine mandates for adults, is leaving the question of requirements for schools to local and state officials, but called them "reasonable."

"Those are decisions on, when it comes to school

requirements, that are made by localities and by states," he told NBC's "Today." "You've seen already some localities and states talk about vaccine requirements for kids. And I think it's a reasonable thing to consider to get those vaccination rates high. And it's also consistent with what we've done for other childhood vaccines, like measles, mumps, polio."

The administration notes that kids who get their first shot within a couple weeks of the expected approval in early November will be fully vaccinated by Christmas.

The U.S. has purchased 65 million doses of the Pfizer pediatric shot — expected to be one third the dosage for adults and adolescents — according to officials, more than enough for every kid in the age group. They will ship in smaller packages of about 100 doses each, so that more providers can deliver them, and they can be stored for up to 10 weeks at standard refrigeration temperatures.

About 219 million Americans aged 12 and up, or 66% of the total population, have received a COVID-19 shot and nearly 190 million are fully vaccinated.

# 'A dangerous time': Portland sees record homicides

By SARA CLINE

Associated Press/Report for America

PORTLAND — It was nearly last call on a Friday when Jacob Eli Knight Vasquez went to get a drink across the street from the tavern where he worked in northwest Portland — an area with a thriving dining scene, where citygoers enjoy laid-back eateries, international cuisines and cozy cafés.

The 34-year-old had been at the pizza bar only a short time when shots rang out. Vasquez was struck by a stray bullet and died at the scene.

His killing in late September was one of the 67 homicides this year in Portland — a city on pace to shatter its previous record of 66 slayings in 1987.

Fear and frustration with gang violence have settled over the metropolis, as stories like Vasquez's make some wary to go out at night.

Unlike previous years, more bystanders are being caught in the crossfire — from people mourning at vigils and sitting in cars to children playing in a park.

"People should be leery because this is a dangerous time," said Lionel Irving Jr., a lifelong Portland resident and a gang outreach worker.

Portland's police department is struggling to keep up amid an acute staffing shortage and budget cuts. Now, Oregon's largest city is implementing novel solutions aimed at improving safety, including adding traffic barrels to prevent drive-by shootings and suspending minor traffic stops so officers can focus on immediate threats.

But critics say the liberal Pacific Northwest city, home to more than 650,000 people, is flailing.

"Let's please untie the hands of our law enforcement officers," Vasquez's brother-in-law, Don Osborn, said

outside the business where Vasquez was slain. "I believe if the proper tools were in place for our law enforcement officers, this wouldn't even have happened."

So far this year, Portland has had about 1,000 shootings, 314 people have been injured by bullets, and firearms have accounted for three-quarters of homicides. Police attribute much of the gunfire to gangs, fights and retaliation killings, but they are also affecting bystanders.

Nine-year-old Hadar Kedem recently told city leaders about a dangerously close call when she was caught in gunfire earlier this year.

Hadar had been playing with her father, brother and dog at a northeast Portland park when a group of people in ski masks started shooting. Hadar and her family dove for cover behind a metal equipment bin. One bullet landed within feet of the fourth-grader.

"I know that not only do I want change, but everyone wants change," Hadar said during a City Council meeting last month. "I want to feel safe."

Nationally, homicides increased by nearly 30% from 2019 to 2020, based on FBI data. However, in Portland, deadly violence is increasing at a faster rate than nearly all major cities, with an 83%

increase in homicides in 2020. Portland has had more homicides in 2021 than some larger cities, including San Francisco, and twice as many as its larger neighbor, Seattle. Other hard-hit Western cities include the Albuquerque, New Mexico, metro area, which has about 679,000 residents and has had a record 97 homicides this year.

Portland police have struggled to quell the violence with a force 128 officers below its authorized strength. Since August 2020, about 200 officers have left the department. Many, in their exit interviews, cited low morale, lack of support from city officials and burnout from months of racial justice protests, which often ended in plumes of tear gas before largely dying down since summer.

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