

Kids aged 5 to 11 will soon be able to get a COVID-19 shot

BY ZEKE MILLER AND LINDSEY TANNER
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Children ages 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 as it detailed plans for the expected authorization of the Pfizer shot for elementary school youngsters in a matter of weeks.

Federal regulators will meet over the next two weeks to weigh the safety and effectiveness of giving low-dose shots to the roughly 28 million children in that age group.

Within hours of formal approval, which is expected after the Food and Drug Administration signs off and a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention advisory panel meets on Nov. 2-3, millions of doses will begin going out to providers across the country, along with the smaller needles needed for injecting young children.

Within days of that, the vaccine will be ready to go into arms on a wide scale.

"We're completing the operational planning to ensure vaccinations for kids ages 5 to 11 are available, easy and

convenient," White House COVID-19 coordinator Jeff Zients said. "We're going to be ready, pending the FDA and CDC decision."

The Pfizer vaccine requires two doses three weeks apart and a two-week wait for full protection to kick in, meaning the first youngsters in line will be fully covered by Christmas.

Some parents can hardly wait.

Dr. Sterling Ransone said his rural Deltaville, Virginia, office is already getting calls from people asking for appointments for their children and saying, "I want my shot now."

"Judging by the number of calls, I think we're going to be slammed for the first several weeks," said Ransone, president of the American Academy of Family Physicians.

Justin Shady, a film and TV writer in Chicago, said his 6-year-old daughter, Grey, got nervous when he told her she would be getting the shots soon. But he is bribing her with a trip to Disney World, and "she's all in."

The family likes to travel. "We really just want to get back in the swing of seeing the world," Shady said.

As for youngsters under 5,

Pfizer and Moderna are studying their vaccines in children down to 6 months old, with results expected later in the year.

The Biden administration noted that the expansion of shots to children under 12 will not look like the start of the country's vaccine rollout 10 months ago, when limited doses and inadequate capacity meant a painstaking wait for many Americans.

The country now has ample supplies of the Pfizer shot to vaccinate the children who will soon be eligible, officials said, and they have been working for months to ensure widespread availability of shots. About 15 million doses will be shipped to providers across the U.S. in the first week after approval, the White House said.

More than 25,000 pediatricians and primary care providers have already signed on to dispense the vaccine to elementary school children, the White House said, in addition to the tens of thousands of drugstores 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 the process.

Deschutes

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"We have all seen the global pandemic significantly reduce traffic in all restaurants, pubs, and tasting rooms. The Roanoke tasting room is no exception," LaLonde said on a call with reporters.

The Deschutes Brewery Tasting Room, opened in 2017, was located in a 4,700-foot-space in downtown Roanoke, a city with a population similar to Bend. The locally popular pub had more than 15 taps of Deschutes beer, along with growlers and brewery merchandise.

But the company experienced "significant financial loss" during the pandemic at the Roanoke location, more than its other locations, said Peter Skrbek, the company's chief financial officer. Skrbek said traffic and visitation during the height of COVID-19 concerns at the Roanoke location were just 30% of normal.

Deschutes Brewery said it will continue to participate in community events in Roanoke with its local partner Blue Ridge Beverage. Deschutes said it will also work with current employees in Roanoke to try to find different jobs within Deschutes Brewery or with another company. Eight employees are affected by the taproom's closure.

"This is not a goodbye from Deschutes to Roanoke at all. We have made a decision to adapt to the current business situation and make the best decision for our company," said LaLonde.

In addition to the tasting room, the company had plans to open up a \$95 million production facility that would employ 100 workers on a 49-acre site in Roanoke. Market challenges and competition forced Deschutes to push back its plans several times but the project never moved forward.

LaLonde said the company will hold on to the land it purchased in Roanoke so it can have the option to build an East Coast facility in the future.

"We are not saying never. We want to hold on to (the land) because we think it's a great opportunity in the future and it makes a whole lot of sense at some point," said LaLonde.

For now, LaLonde said there is no need for another facility because production in Bend is running at just 70% of capacity.

"Roanoke is a great transportation hub. It makes sense to be a hub in the East Coast, but it will be a while before we will even do that," said LaLonde.

Deschutes Brewery maintains its full-service pub locations in Bend and Portland.

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