



Massachusetts Chapter
OF THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRICS
INCORPORATED IN MASSACHUSETTS



**Massachusetts Chain
Pharmacy Council**



**MASSACHUSETTS
Health & Hospital
ASSOCIATION**

For Immediate Release

October 28, 2020

MAHP CONTACT: Lynda Jackson – 774-212-0286
BCBSMA CONTACT: Amy McHugh – 617-246-2311
MHA CONTACT: Catherine Bromberg – 617-331-2044
MMS CONTACT: Tom Flanagan – 508-783-0370
MCPC CONTACT: Patrick Huntington – 617-922-0526
MCAAP CONTACT: Cathleen Haggerty – 781-895-9852
LEAGUE CONTACT: Kerin O’Toole – 617-921-9803

Massachusetts Organizations Launch Child Vaccinations Awareness Campaign

Boston, MA – Restrictions on and concerns about in-person health care visits during the COVID-19 pandemic have led to delays in critical, routine pediatric vaccines. These delays put children at risk of preventable illnesses, such as measles, mumps, and whooping cough - avoidable diseases that still result in thousands of hospitalizations and deaths each year.

Equitable access to vaccines is a priority across health care. Routine childhood vaccines are provided free of charge to individuals through age 18 through the Massachusetts Department of Public Health’s Immunization Program. At the same time, primary care providers and pediatricians are implementing creative and flexible programs to vaccinate patients, which health plans support through flexible billing policies. This supports the American Academy of Pediatrics’ recommendation that children receive preventive vaccinations with their primary care clinician to ensure routine screenings, evaluations, and counseling.

We are proud that Massachusetts ranks first in the nation on children’s and teenagers’ immunization rates. The Massachusetts Association of Health Plans (MAHP), Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts (BCBSMA), the Massachusetts Health and Hospital Association (MHA), the Massachusetts Medical Society (MMS), the Massachusetts Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics (MCAAP), the

Organization of Nurse Leaders (ONL), the Massachusetts League of Community Health Centers (the League) and the Massachusetts Chain Pharmacy Council (MCPC) today launched a collective effort to ensure that, working together, our state is able to **Stay #1!**

We strongly support our state's efforts to encourage flu vaccines for children and adults. As the Commonwealth begins to reopen, children return to school, and we enter the cold and flu season, it is more critically important than ever that we work together to ensure that children are up-to-date with their routine vaccinations and their flu shots. We urge residents of the Commonwealth to join together in getting their flu vaccines this year to both protect themselves from possible severe health outcomes and to prevent stressing hospitals that continue to care for COVID-19 patients.

Collectively, we are reminding families in the Commonwealth to get pediatric vaccinations and flu shots. Massachusetts residents can safely get vaccinated in many places, including:

- Licensed health care provider's office (especially for all routine pediatric vaccinations)
- A pharmacy, or pharmacy clinic
- Community Health Centers
- Urgent Care Centers
- State and municipal sponsored clinics
- Employer sponsored clinics
- Hospital Outpatient flu shot clinics

There are over 1,000 pharmacies in Massachusetts providing their patients with vaccinations and in 2018 one in three adults received their flu shot at a pharmacy. Our hospitals and healthcare organizations remain safe places for in-person appointments or to seek care for any medical need. Individuals can find out where they can get vaccinated by contacting their primary care provider or visiting vaccinefinder.org.

Vaccines are safe and effective, and our organizations are committed to doing our part to make sure that Massachusetts patients and families can conveniently and timely access their necessary vaccinations. We remind the community that getting flu vaccine will not give you the flu and is the best way to ensure that you – and those around you – are protected against the virus.

Organizations continue to develop initiatives and promoting efforts to address childhood vaccinations. Below are some of the actions (with links) that the organizations are taking individually:

Note: Please contact organizations individually to learn more about their specific work.

- The Massachusetts Association of Health Plans distributed a toolkit of resources to promote Child Vaccinations in the Commonwealth
 - Informational Resources and draft language for a newsletter/email campaigns sent to member plans.
 - MAHP Infographics in collaboration with National Association of Chain Drug Stores and additional MAHP Infographics encouraging child vaccinations being shared on social media platforms: <https://twitter.com/MAHPHealth>
 - MAHP Chart - Inventory of policies, billing flexibilities and practices being shared on MAHP website. <https://www.mahp.com/>
- The Mass League of Community Health Centers is running a Facebook and television [PSA campaign](#) focusing on the importance of childhood vaccinations.

- The community pharmacies are developing plans with government officials to accelerate immunization plans to address this public health concern.
- The Massachusetts Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics and its Immunization Initiative are dedicated to fully immunizing all Massachusetts children and adolescents against vaccine preventable diseases through advocacy, collaboration, education, and communication of best practices. To accomplish its mission, the Immunization Initiative:
 - Advocates for legislative and regulatory policies which optimize the immunization of Massachusetts children and adolescents by working closely with Massachusetts executive and legislative leadership, and with state agencies.
 - Builds collaborative partnerships with organizations which share the Immunization Initiative’s mission.
 - Develops educational activities for healthcare professionals, including conferences, Grand Rounds seminars, and webinars, which promote vaccine confidence.
 - Participates in and promotes national immunization awareness campaigns (AAP, CDC) tailored to state immunization activities and needs.
 - Utilizes its newsletter, website, and social media presence to promote the importance of childhood immunization.
- The Massachusetts Medical Society has publicly supported the state mandate flu vaccination of school-aged kids: [Massachusetts Medical Society on flu vaccination for school-aged children](#)
 - They have further shared Letters to the Editor on the topic of getting your flu shot - that ran in [several papers](#)
 - In mid-September, MMS issued a general flu vaccination statement.
 - MMS has also shared a [video message](#) addressing flu vaccinations.
- Massachusetts hospitals continue to host flu clinics and are using all vehicles at their disposal – such as advertising, social media, and newsletters – to emphasize the importance of staying up to date with vaccinations among their communities.
 - MHA has provided members with a “Fighting the Flu” toolkit to help spread the word in their area and is undertaking a [social media campaign](#) to message members of the general public.
 - MHA has endorsed the American Hospital Association’s [United Against the Flu campaign](#), which is geared toward a national audience.
- The Blue Cross members can use the health plan's Find-a-Doctor tool to locate a flu shot provider. If members need additional help finding a provider or have questions about coverage, they can reach a [TeamBlue](#) member service representative by calling the number on the front of their member ID card.
 - For more information about influenza and the flu vaccine, Blue Cross members can visit the [Flu Facts](#) page on the [MyBlue](#) website and app.
 - Blue Cross members also have access to online [childhood immunization resources](#), including an [immunization and screening schedule](#).
 - The health plan’s news service, Coverage, also reports regularly on the flu, childhood vaccinations and other health issues. Recent articles include:
 - [Job No. 1 this fall: Get a flu shot](#)
 - ['Getting vaccinated is a top priority for kids'](#)
 - [Video: How vaccines work](#)

About MAHP

The Massachusetts Association of Health Plans represents 17 health plans covering nearly 3 million Massachusetts residents. It is dedicated to improving health for all in Massachusetts by promoting affordable, safe, and coordinated health care.

About MHA

The Massachusetts Health and Hospital Association (MHA) serves as the unified voice for Massachusetts hospitals and health systems. Founded in 1936, MHA represents over 100 hospitals and healthcare organizations, as well as patients across the state. Through advocacy, education, and collaboration, MHA's mission is to improve the overall health of the commonwealth and support providers' efforts to offer high-quality, affordable, and accessible care.

About MMS

The Massachusetts Medical Society (MMS) is the statewide professional association for physicians and medical students, supporting 25,000 members. We are dedicated to educating and advocating for the physicians of Massachusetts and patients locally and nationally. A leadership voice in health care, the MMS contributes physician and patient perspectives to influence health-related legislation at the state and federal levels, works in support of public health, provides expert advice on physician practice management, and addresses issues of physician well-being. Under the auspices of the NEJM Group, the MMS extends our mission globally by advancing medical knowledge from research to patient care through the New England Journal of Medicine, NEJM Catalyst, and the NEJM Journal Watch family of specialty publications, and through our education products for health care professionals: NEJM Knowledge+, NEJM Resident 360, and our accredited and comprehensive continuing medical education programs.

About MCAAP

The Massachusetts Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (MCAAP) represents more than 1,600 primary care pediatricians, pediatric medical subspecialists, and pediatric surgical specialists across the Commonwealth. Its members are dedicated to improving the health and well-being of children by providing quality health care and advocating for them and their families.

About MCPC

The Massachusetts Chain Pharmacy Council represents traditional drug stores, supermarkets and mass merchants with pharmacies. Chains operate nearly 750 pharmacies throughout Massachusetts. They fill over 90 million prescriptions yearly and help patients use their medicine correctly and safely.

About BCBSMA

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts (bluecrossma.org) is a community-focused, tax-paying, not-for-profit health plan headquartered in Boston. We're the trusted health plan for more than 25,000 Massachusetts employers and are committed to working with others in a spirit of shared responsibility to make quality health care affordable. Consistent with our corporate promise to always put our 2.8 million members first, we're rated among the nation's best health plans for member satisfaction and quality. Connect with us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [YouTube](#), and [LinkedIn](#).

About ONL

The Organization of Nurse Leaders - MA, RI, NH, CT, VT (ONL) is a not-for-profit, professional membership organization for current and aspiring nurse leaders. Its membership is comprised of more than 1,100 nurses from across five New England states. ONL's members lead more than 275,000 licensed nurses who care for 1.3 million patients per year in hospitals alone. Our members also care for tens of thousands of patients in other care settings. ONL's mission is to advance a culture of health through excellence in nursing and the organization works in full collaboration with local and national professional healthcare organizations to promote excellence in nursing leadership, and by extension, high-quality and high-value patient care.

About Mass. League

The Massachusetts League of Community Health Centers (the League) represents and serves the state's 52 community health centers and their more than one million patients. Founded in 1972, the League promotes health equity by expanding high quality, comprehensive and locally responsive primary and preventive care to underserved and under-resourced communities.

###