

## Governor Announces COVID-19 Vaccine for 7<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> Graders

Governor Newsom announced Friday morning that California is issuing the nation's first COVID-19 vaccination mandate for school children.

Under the terms of the public health order, once the FDA approves the COVID-19 vaccine for children ages 12 to 15, the state will require that all 7th to 12th graders be vaccinated against COVID-19 in order to attend either public or private school. According to the Governor's announcement, exemptions will be granted for medical, religious, or personal belief reasons.

The mandate will go into effect the first semester following that FDA approval - which could be either January or July of 2022.

A note about our own timeline: AUSD has consistently supported and advocated for getting students vaccinated against COVID-19. Through partnerships with local pharmacies, we have provided five vaccination clinics over the past four months and plan to provide more through the fall. We strongly believe that vaccinations are a powerful tool for slowing the spread of COVID-19, reducing the severity of symptoms, and helping us maintain healthy schools.

We are aware that other districts across the state announced vaccination mandates before the Governor's announcement today. We would like to clarify that none of those mandates have been set up to take place immediately. Instead, many of them were not scheduled to take effect later this year or early next year. Still others were not actual mandates but announcements of resolutions to explore such mandates.

AUSD has been actively exploring this option for more than a month. We have not announced a vaccination mandate for several reasons, however, including:

- **Substantial legal questions and concerns** about whether we as an individual school district have the authority to require vaccinations prior to legislators and public health officials providing a mandate. Based on advice from our legal counsel, we preferred to wait until such a mandate was issued at the state level.
- In addition, we have been and will continue to be mindful of the **equity concerns** embedded in vaccination mandates. We are aware that a large percentage of the country's unvaccinated population are people of color and, as educators, we want to be extremely thoughtful about mandates that could disproportionately exclude some of our most vulnerable students.

- **Implications for independent study** Under current state regulations, students who are not attending in-person instruction need to be provided with independent study options. A vaccination mandate will potentially require us to further provide independent study to students on a scale that currently exceeds our capacity in that area. We are hopeful that as mandates gradually take effect our own planning will be complemented with support and policies at the state level that will help us expand and provide these services for families who will need them.

“We need to be thoughtful and proactively considerate about how this will impact certain families in our community and who would be excluded from in-person instruction,” Superintendent Scuderi said in his [video update Friday afternoon](#). “While I do think a vaccine mandate is the best path forward eventually, there certainly are going to be some implications that we need to be very considerate of as we develop a process and determine what that looks like in AUSD.”

AUSD ultimately supports the Governor’s vaccine plan and will begin work immediately to fully understand the plan and its details and confer with our public health partners to determine best strategies for implementing it. We will share more news about this as plans develop at both the state and local levels.