Date:	August 18, 2021
To:	Chief School Administrators, Charter School and Renaissance School Lead Persons, Administrators of Approved Private Schools for Students with Disabilities, Administrators of Nonpublic Schools
From:	Judith M. Persichilli, Commissioner New Jersey Department of Health
Subject:	Memo to New Jersey Schools Regarding Vaccinations

As the school year begins this fall, educators and students in New Jersey will be returning to full in-person learning. To keep all New Jersey students, teachers, and staff safe and in school, school districts and schools are encouraged to take steps to support COVID-19 vaccination, testing, and other prevention measures among their teachers, staff, students, and families.

A core way to support safe return is to **encourage school staff, students, and their families to get vaccinated.** Per the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), COVID-19 vaccination among all eligible students (12 years and older), teachers, staff, and household members is a critical strategy to help schools safely resume full in-person operations. **Vaccines are free for all, immigration status will never be asked, and health insurance is not required.**

Districts and schools can promote vaccination by **hosting vaccination clinics**. School-located vaccination clinics can provide a familiar and convenient location for teachers, staff, and eligible students and their families. Districts and schools may partner with local health authorities, providers, or vendors to set up these clinics. **If a school district, charter or renaissance school, nonpublic school, or Approved Private School for Students with Disabilities (hereinafter referred to as "school districts") would like to host a vaccination clinic but does not have a local partner, please reach out to NJ Department of Health (NJDOH). All school districts are eligible for support**. For support, contact Mehnaz Mustafa at Mehnaz.Mustafa@doh.nj.gov.

Currently, only individuals 12 years and older are eligible for vaccination, so many schools will have a mix of students who are eligible and ineligible for vaccinations. As a result, **COVID-19 testing in school is important** for promptly detecting new COVID-19 cases, reducing risk of transmission or outbreaks in school, and protecting students, teachers, and staff from COVID-19. The NJDOH Communicable Disease Service (CDS) recommends that all K-12 schools have a plan in place to provide or refer symptomatic individuals for diagnostic testing. It is also recommended that K-12 schools develop screening testing strategies to identify asymptomatic cases where resources allow. **School districts that would like to stand up a screening testing program but are concerned about resources or need additional guidance and support, please contact to the NJDOH for support. Any school district is eligible for support.** For support, contact Stephanie Gee at Stephanie.Gee@doh.nj.gov.

School districts can also promote a safe school return by serving as a strong and trusted resource for COVID-19 information. School districts and school are encouraged to **share information and perform outreach to their school's community around vaccinations, testing, and other prevention strategies (e.g., masking, physical distancing)** to foster a safe school and community practice. Schools are welcome to use the enclosed template letter to parents and guardians at their discretion. **Up-to-date information should be consistently provided to school staff to support the answering of any general COVID-19 questions from students and their families.** Useful resources to share may be the latest CDC guidance, NJDOH CDS guidance, and US Health and Human Services' (HHS) Back to School Toolkit (links below). Schools and school districts are consistently a large part of the daily life for many children and families and are thus uniquely positioned to educate and inform about COVID-19 safety measures.

Thank you for your help in supporting a safe return to school for our students this fall!

NJDOH contacts for vaccination or testing support requests:
- For vaccination, contact Mehnaz Mustafa at Mehnaz.Mustafa@doh.nj.gov
- For testing, contact Stephanie Gee at Stephanie.Gee@doh.nj.gov

To find a COVID-19 vaccination clinic near you:
- Visit the **NJ COVID-19 Vaccine Appointment Finder**
- Call **NJ Vaccine Call Center** at 855-568-0545
- Visit vaccine section of **NJ COVID-19 Information Hub**

To find a COVID-19 testing site near you:
- Visit **testing section** of the NJ COVID-19 Information Hub
- Visit **Castlight COVID-19 Test Site Finder**

For additional information:
- Visit the **NJ COVID-19 Information Hub**
- Call 211 or 1-800-962-1253 with COVID-19 questions (available 24 hours / 7 days a week)
- **NJDOH CDS' COVID-19: Information for Schools**
- **CDC Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools**
- **US HHS Back to School Toolkit**