



The Kid Angle

Kid-focused news from First Focus on Children

"Pandemic of the unequal" challenges vaccination efforts for kids

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As Thanksgiving approaches, many parents are grateful that their 5-to-11-year-olds can now be vaccinated before seeing the grandparents and others for the holidays.

But what about kids who want the vaccine and can't get it?

Experts today told First Focus on Children that the country's "unvaccinated" are not a faceless group of COVID-doubters, but people — and children — who have been chronically underserved by the U.S. health care system.

"This rollout needs to be very different from the one we did for adults," First Focus on Children President Bruce Lesley told the virtual Congressional briefing. First Focus began advocating for a [child-specific vaccine plan earlier this year](#) and [our recent recommendations](#) jibe with the [Biden Administration's plan](#). Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-OH) and Rep. Kim Schrier (D-WA), the only pediatrician serving in Congress, sponsored the briefing.

Calling COVID-19 a "pandemic of the unequal," Dr. Rhea Boyd suggested that **pre-existing barriers — including lack of access to health insurance — are the real challenge**. Boyd, a pediatrician and public health advocate, said other barriers include a lack of paid leave to take children to be vaccinated, and a lack of child care to watch non-eligible children while eligible children get their shot.

COVID-19 has disproportionately affected children of color:

Equity for Children & the COVID-19 Vaccine



Racial Disparities

- Black, Hispanic, and Asian children have had lower rates of testing and are **significantly more likely to be infected** than white children
- Black and Hispanic children have been **more likely to be hospitalized**
- Hispanic, Black, and American Indian and Alaska Native children are **more likely to die**
- Children of racial and ethnic minorities accounted for **65% of those who lost a primary caregiver**, while making up only about 50% of the child population.
- These children experienced orphanhood or the death of a primary caregiver:
 - 1 of every 168 American Indian/Alaska Native children
 - 1 of every 310 Black children
 - 1 of every 412 Hispanic children
 - 1 of every 612 Asian children
 - 1 of every 753 white children



Source: Kaiser Family Foundation

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And yet, black and Hispanic children are the least likely to be vaccinated, Boyd said.

Panel recommendations include:

- **No wrong door policies:** If a child comes to be vaccinated, the provider should vaccinate siblings, caregivers and others seeking the vaccine.
- **Community-based vaccination sites** with family-friendly hours
- **Cost-neutral vaccination** — which would include free child care and transportation to clinics.
- **Improve access to credible information**, for instance by removing pay walls
- **Upgrade the health care data infrastructure** and require reporting on race and ethnicity for any vaccine

The recommendations echo those from the [Vaccine Equity Cooperative](#), a working group aiming to protect children under 12 and their families and communities.

Get in touch if you'd like slides of the presentation, or you can wait for the movie (i.e. the recording, which will post later today).

Infrastructure: What's in it for kids?

President Biden this week signed into law the \$1 trillion infrastructure bill. Here's some of the great news for kids:

- \$65 billion in funding for **increased broadband access**, which will in part help to bridge the digital divide and homework gap, which affects students and families who lack reliable internet access.
- More than \$7 billion in funding to support **electric school buses**
- **\$15 billion to replace lead pipes**, which cause unhealthy drinking water for children

NEXT UP.....CBO score

Even as I write this, CBO is releasing the final pieces of its score on the Build Back Better bill. Expect a **House vote on the measure tomorrow or over weekend. Stay tuned.**

And have a very Happy Thanksgiving!



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First Focus on Children

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