

County of Santa Clara

Public Health Department



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MEMORANDUM

DATE: November 24, 2021

TO: Honorable Members of the Board of Supervisors
Jeffrey V. Smith, M.D., J.D., County Executive

FROM: Sara H. Cody, M.D., Health Officer/Director, Public Health Department

SUBJECT: Update on Mobile Vaccination (MoVax) Team School Clinics

At the November 17, 2021, Health and Hospital Committee meeting, Supervisor Simitian requested an off-agenda report on the progress of scheduling the Public Health Department's Mobile Vaccination Unit (MoVax) clinics at schools in Supervisorial District 5. This report responds to that request.

As part of its ongoing strategy to engage elementary schools for the recently authorized COVID-19 vaccine for children ages 5-11, MoVax has been reaching out to schools who have a demonstrated need and offering onsite clinics to supplement the many options in the existing vaccination landscape. The demand for MoVax clinics has been very high, especially in the first few weeks of the pediatric vaccine authorization. MoVax recently added an additional team to address increased demand and support schools countywide, including those in District 5.

MoVax has contacted almost a dozen elementary schools in District 5, with seven schools already confirmed for vaccine clinics in the first week of December. We intend to host at least 10 County-operated clinics in this part of the county before December 20, 2021, pending school availability. We anticipate additional clinics to be confirmed in the coming days and will continue to evaluate interested schools on an ongoing basis.

The overall demand for MoVax services is expected to decline in early 2022, which will allow for other, more permanent strategies to begin to replace it.

Background

The MoVax team is the County's main strategy for closing disparities in vaccination uptake primarily in populations disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. These communities represent populations with low vaccination rates, industries with lower-wage workers, and organizations that have had COVID-19 outbreaks in the past. MoVax is a "high touch" strategy that complements the County's Mass Vaccination sites, which are also located throughout the county and designed to ensure vaccination access for all people in our community.

Board of Supervisors: Mike Wasserman, Cindy Chavez, Otto Lee, Susan Ellenberg, S. Joseph Simitian
County Executive: Jeffrey V. Smith

MoVax addresses health inequities by reaching members of our community who experience challenges getting to mass vaccination sites, retail pharmacies, healthcare providers or other vaccination venues due to an array of physical, structural, and cultural barriers. Vaccinations are provided in familiar neighborhood spaces, at times that are convenient, and with vaccination staff who are bilingual, bicultural, or represent the communities we serve, as much as possible.

The Public Health Department partners with organizations and community partners, including schools, businesses, churches, residential complexes, food pantries, civic entities, and other community sites to host vaccination clinics.

With the authorization of pediatric vaccines, MoVax developed a strategy to ensure that 5–11-year-olds, and their eligible siblings and parents, who are less likely to be reached by other vaccination venues are afforded easier access to vaccinations. The centerpiece of this strategy is serving children in a school-based setting. Based on epidemiological data and in collaboration with the Santa Clara County Office of Education (SCCOE), MoVax continues scheduling clinics in school districts that serve children most at risk of health inequities in areas that have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19.

Overview of School-Based Strategy

To identify vaccine equity gaps across the 351 elementary schools in Santa Clara County, MoVax employs several measures encompassing a broad composite of variables to indicate gaps in vaccine access among children ages 5-11. These include the California Healthy Places Index (HPI), the federal Title 1 school designation, and the Socioeconomically Disadvantaged (SED) percentage (a composite measure developed by the California Department of Education). The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) also has an equity goal for vaccination that helps to ensure that children and families with low access to vaccine are prioritized.

This information is used to direct limited resources across the county, in all supervisorial districts. While these indicators are used to assess where the interest and need is highest, Public Health knows that there are pockets of need in all schools and school districts across every part of the county that need to be served.

MoVax began its school clinic scheduling by reaching out to schools with the highest need. If a school expressed interest in hosting a MoVax clinic, the process requires that the team conduct a site visit to coordinate logistics and then confirm the clinic date. Not all schools utilize a MoVax clinic because some schools partner with another entity, such as a retail pharmacy, to vaccinate their student body. In coordination with SCCOE, we also encourage schools to reach out directly to MoVax to express their interest in hosting a County-operated clinic or if they prefer to work with the SCCOE to partner with another provider.

MoVax recently added an additional mobile vaccination team, effective immediately, to facilitate clinics in District 5 as part of our strategy to support all schools that have a demonstrated need.

Additional strategies to reach children ages 5 – 11

In addition to MoVax, a variety of other vaccine providers are serving children ages 5 – 11. Public Health has been coordinating efforts with these partners in order to maximize reach and minimize duplication of community-based vaccination efforts. These other service providers include large health care providers such Kaiser and Palo Alto Medical Foundation, as well as over 140 providers which have been onboarded by the Public Health Pharmacy. Community health clinics and school-based health clinics are also offering vaccination, not only to their patients but also to members of the public near their clinic locations. Some clinics have received additional federal funding to provide mobile vaccination clinics and events in the neighborhoods where they are located as a mechanism to sustain efforts after MoVax operations eventually get scaled back early next year. Retail pharmacies, such as CVS, Walgreens, Safeway, Walmart and small independent pharmacies, have joined in the countywide vaccination effort by offering the vaccine at their retail locations. These locations are already in communities and have trusted relationships with the public they serve. Some retail pharmacies have extended their efforts beyond their physical stores by collaborating with schools and the SCCOE. In addition, the County continues to operate mass vaccination sites at several locations.

Public Health is also engaging with local community health clinics through the funding of immunization grants which will provide funding to vaccinate eligible patients and the general public in their respective catchment areas. Leveraging the capacity and community knowledge of community health clinics broadens vaccine access and offers a sustainable mechanism for reaching communities most disproportionately affected by COVID-19. This approach is ideal as these clinics are permanently located in the community and residents are able to continue their care even after vaccination occurs.

In addition to the aforementioned options, SCCOE and other community partners are in regular communication with the MoVax team to assess all available vaccination resources for the 5-11 year old population. Public Health has been closely coordinating with SCCOE in order to collaborate both at the district and individual school level.

Since its inception, the MoVax operation has successfully provided more than 100,000 doses of COVID-19 vaccine at over 950 clinics. We will continue to serve the communities who are most in need, and ensuring reach in all parts of the county, while concurrently building a sustainable partner framework for future vaccination efforts that can reliably meet the anticipated future needs of all children and families in Santa Clara County.

cc: Chief Board Aides
Miguel Márquez, Chief Operating Officer
James R. Williams, County Counsel
Tiffany Lennear, Acting Clerk of the Board
Michael Balliet, Deputy Director, Public Health Department