

Association of American Indian Physicians: Child vaccinations against COVID-19 are critical to preserving our native cultures

New resources made available during Native American Heritage Month to improve health outcomes for American Indian and Alaska Native youth



Downloadable press kit accessible [here](#).

OKLAHOMA CITY, OKLA. - The Association of American Indian Physicians (AAIP), a national non-profit working to improve the health of American Indian and Alaska Native communities, is partnering with the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) in [a campaign](#) to encourage increased COVID-19 vaccination rates among American Indians and Alaska Natives – with an emphasis on vaccines for children ages 6 months and up. November is Native American Heritage Month, and improving Native American health outcomes continues to be a top priority for the healthcare industry.

“Protecting our communities includes protecting our children, who contract and spread viruses sometimes at a higher rate than others because of their close proximity to peers in daycare and school,” said AAIP Executive Director Tom Anderson. “Our hope is all American Indians and Alaska Natives eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine – especially children – get vaccinated and keep up with their boosters and other seasonal vaccines. AAIP is proud to stand with and serve tribal members, physicians, healers, elders and our vast network of communities. Healthy tribal communities mean we can continue passing traditions on to our next generations of leaders.”

AAIP directly addresses health disparities among Native populations. According to the National Institutes of Health (NIH), American Indian and Alaska Natives suffer the highest rate of caregiver loss from the pandemic – 4.5 times higher than White children. The pandemic affected Native American communities acutely. In the same study, NIH noted that 1 of every 168 American Indian/Alaska Native children experienced orphanhood or death of a caregiver because of COVID-19.

AAIP physicians say these disparities make vaccinations crucial for native youth who can get sick or spread the disease to more vulnerable native community members like teachers, caregivers and community elders.

“As the pandemic has evolved, so have our efforts to protect our communities. Child vaccinations against the COVID-19 pandemic are safe, effective and available to American Indians and Alaska Natives,

and they're a tool for maintaining our cultures and keeping friends and neighbors healthy," said AAIP President Lukejohn Day, MD. "Vaccination is a community effort with a colossal community impact."

As COVID-19 and variant cases are expected to rise over the holidays and into the winter, AAIP is providing parents, caregivers and physicians online resources at aaipvax.org to increase awareness of and accessibility to vaccines and boosters. The interactive site includes statistics, trending topics and safety information regarding child COVID-19 vaccinations. Additionally, [Video resources](#) were made available this month to make critical and accurate information even more accessible.

AAIP recommends American Indians and Alaska Native parents and caregivers contact their local Indian Health Service Clinic, pharmacy or physician to schedule COVID-19 vaccines and boosters for themselves and their families.

About the Association of American Indian Physicians (AAIP)

In 1971, fourteen American Indian and Alaska Native physicians endeavored to improve the overall health of their communities and the Association of American Indian Physicians was born. Today, hundreds of licensed and practicing physicians around the country are committed to that same mission. AAIP pursues excellence in Native American health care by advocating education in the health sciences and honoring traditional healing principles. AAIP members directly address widely acknowledged disparities in American Indian and Alaska Native health. For more information about the Association of American Indian Physicians, see aaip.org. Vaccination campaign resources can be found at aaipvax.org.

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