



Susan Sirota, MD, FAAP, Chair of PediaTrust, LLC, chatted with us about how they have worked to achieve high vaccination rates in their network.

PediaTrust offices have administered over 38,000 doses of the vaccine and has great uptake for the 6 month - 4 year population.

What have you done to achieve these amazing COVID-19 vaccination rates?

We have created a culture in our offices that supports COVID-19 vaccines. We try not to miss an opportunity to vaccinate, no matter what. Our mindset is to vaccinate everyone. We have done this in a variety of ways. We offer vaccines at every type of visit we can. We have held mass vaccination clinics.

You can see [here](#) that we have a diverse demographic that we serve and a large area of coverage. So, that is one of the things that makes me really proud of our work and one of the reasons I think it might be helpful for people to hear what we have done, because it's worked with those different populations.

Tell me about the mass vaccination clinics you have held. What do those events look like?

So, we have scheduled vaccination times into the office schedule. We clear the schedule for a couple of hours and patients come just for Covid vaccinations. We also partnered with a local high school to use their space for vaccinating 5- to 11-year-olds. There we had 12 vaccination stations. Another time we used a large conference center at our business office for mass vaccinating teens. Recently, we even used an empty store front in one of our towns to hold a mass vaccination clinic for our 6 month to 4 year olds. For these we use an assembly line approach and really have those mass vaccination events down to a science at this point.

We are also able to use our parking lots for drive up clinics for COVID and flu vaccines. So, we have two lines for the cars. We have a doctor in between the lines who can answer questions while people are waiting. They then proceed to our nurses who are waiting to give either Flu only or COVID and Flu vaccines. Children don't even have to get out of their carseats! We have hot spots and laptops with us so that things are entered into our EHR in real time.

Can you go into more detail about what a culture of supporting COVID-19 vaccines looks like?

Every pediatric practice is struggling with staffing. We know this. So, we had to create an organized, efficient process for vaccinating. We prioritized that. We have pictures of staff being vaccinated posted on our social media. Many of us have COVID-19 vaccine stickers on our laptops that patients and families can see. We have marketing materials, some we made and some we take from ICAAP or I-VAC toolkits, in our office and on social media. We send email notifications to patients, and we even have vaccine information on our hold message.

So, we have worked to create consistent messaging from the top to the bottom in our spaces and I really believe that is key. Everyone at our office understands the message we want to convey around COVID-19 vaccines – the nurses, front desk staff, schedulers, MAs and all the doctors. We also require staying up to date with COVID-19 vaccines for all our patient-facing staff. Not only does this make our patients feel safe in our offices, but we ensure a team culture that is supportive of giving all children COVID-19 vaccines.

What are some of the things you think have been important to do in achieving these vaccination rates?

"Everyone at our office understands the message we want to convey around COVID-19 vaccines – the nurses, front desk staff, schedulers, MAs and all the doctors."

Making scheduling easy for patients- scheduling is available through our patient portal.

We must get past the idea that there is an administrative burden. In our group, we learn from one another and just have good management of our COVID-19 vaccine program at this point. You can use jot forms for self scheduling and registration for appointments, you don't need complex systems. We have vaccine lot number stickers pre-made for vaccination cards to just make sure things can run as smoothly as possible.

What kind of things are you doing to ensure staff stay up to date with the changes that keep coming out around these vaccines?

We have townhalls for staff. They are held during the day when we know staff can attend and they are also recorded and posted to our staff hub for those who cannot make it. They are not required, but we get great attendance, and we hold them as needed to make sure that everyone knows what the clinical guidelines state.

You must create vaccine champions at your clinic, and it doesn't have to be the clinician. In fact, maybe it shouldn't be since pediatricians are exhausted. Empower people in your office to be that for you.

What are some things that have worked operationally?

We tell people when to come – and when vaccines are coming. We schedule their appointments for the next doses before they leave, actually we do this automatically. We even schedule return visits for vaccines for those who said they didn't want them at the time of an office visit. For example, we have teenagers who want to delay due to an event or test or sporting event they have the next day, and they don't want to potentially feel ill (due to possible vaccine side effects). We have them commit to that date then and there before they leave.

We have also been vaccinating with one product only and have found that to be helpful – this picking one product to carry. Our patients know what we have, and they have come to expect it as each new age group is eligible or a booster becomes available. Everyone is familiar with the one product in our clinic and our patients aren't left wondering what we are going to have either.

What are some of the things that have worked when talking to patients and families?

Well, it is important first to have the willingness to take time and have the conversation...even if the person who roomed your patient/family tells you they said they don't want to be vaccinated. I was once told "saying nothing is saying something" and I remember that when I am interacting with my patients and their parents. For those who are hesitant, it is helpful to respectfully present your recommendation as an ongoing conversation that you want to continue to have with them.

You can break it down for your staff and for people, it's not an overwhelming thing to do.

What is something you want your peers who are not vaccinating in their spaces to know?

This might not be everyone's favorite thing to hear, but from a business perspective, this is an opportunity. It took long hard work to get payments for routine vaccination administration to go from \$6 to \$16 dollars – and we really thank ICAAP for making that happen – but, these vaccines are paid almost 3 times that amount. Relatively, that's such a high payment, so there is revenue to be made. It is kind of unbelievable actually. It just makes sense to do this on so many levels.

Also, ICAAP has tremendous resources, and we make sure that someone from our office goes to all the trainings or webinars that you hold around COVID-19 vaccines so we stay informed.

**Thank you to Dr. Sirota and PediaTrust staff for
being COVID-19 vaccine champions!**