

# The vaccination journey

in special schools



## BEFORE VACCINATION

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### Stakeholder support

- Students and parents value getting vaccines at school because of the familiar setting and the support of trusted teachers but...
- Some health and school staff question whether schools are suitable vaccination sites for students needing higher levels of support.



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### Health-school liaison

- Schools play a vital role in facilitating the vaccination program by serving as a bridge between health and families but...
- School staff encounter difficulties in effectively fulfilling their responsibilities due to limited resources and time constraints.



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### Parental consent

- Online consent is more efficient for school and health staff because it streamlines processes but...
- Parents of children with disability face barriers in accessing the new system and lack information that is tailored to their specific needs and concerns.



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### Student preparation

- Students like to be prepared for vaccinations as it empowers them with a sense of agency and control but...
- Many are not informed beforehand due to assumptions about their anxiety and cognitive abilities, which can amplify fear and distress in some students.



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### Health team preparation

- Consistent nursing teams that know how to work with kids with disability are key for positive experiences but...
- Nurses lack formal disability-specific training, provisions on 'reasonable adjustments', and pre-arrival information on students' needs.



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## DURING VACCINATION

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### Ensuring a supportive care environment

- A familiar, low-stimulus environment with supportive people who know students' needs can provide a calm and safe place for vaccination but...
- A medical-like set-up and unfamiliar people make students more anxious.



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### Gaining students' cooperation

- Building rapport with students, offering them choices, and responding to their needs and preference helps to foster their cooperation but...
- Some students are surprised with vaccination and this can negatively impact their experiences.



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### Reducing students' anxiety

- Students' vaccination anxiety can be reduced via incentives, rewards, distractions, trusted support people, giving options, and supporting their agency but...
- The use of support strategies is not streamlined and some approaches can inadvertently add to students' trauma.



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### Holding students for vaccination

- Highly anxious students may need to be held in a comforting and supportive way to be vaccinated but...
- School staff are unclear if and how they can hold students for school vaccination.



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### Deciding to end vaccination attempts

- Staff will end vaccinations if the student becomes too distressed or if they deem it unsafe to continue but...
- Families often struggle to find alternative options such as specialist vaccination services due to lack of awareness or barriers to access.



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## AFTER VACCINATION



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### Immediate aftercare

- Students must be monitored for 15 minutes post-vaccination to watch for adverse reactions but...
- School staff say facilitating a smooth return to familiar routines or calming activities to help distract and reduce distress is in the students' best interest.

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### Follow-up with parents

- Parents are informed of unsuccessful vaccinations and catch-up options but...
- Parents aren't informed how their child coped with completed vaccinations and schools aren't informed of the vaccination status of students who could not be vaccinated at school.



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### Catch-up vaccinations

- Parents prefer school catch-up programs but...
- These opportunities are limited by the change to single dose HPV vaccine and some schools' reluctance to arrange catch-ups due to issues like student refusal and workload.



"If he doesn't get it done at school, it's not gonna happen"  
- Mother



#### Acknowledgements

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