



# NATIONAL NEWS FLASH



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## VACCINATION: CHILDREN BETWEEN 12 AND 17 YEARS

NAPTOSA has noted the Minister of Health's announcement on 15 October 2021 that everything is in place to commence with the vaccination of children in the age group 12 to 17 years, which would make the majority of high school children eligible for the vaccine.

The Pfizer vaccine will be utilised as it has been approved by the South African Health Products Regulatory Authority (SAHPRA) for this age group, albeit that only one dose will be administered for now.

NAPTOSA welcomes the initiative by the Department of Health because we believe it will have a positive impact in normalizing our education system and seeing us through to the end of the academic year without any disruptions.

Although the Minister did not address the issue in his statement, it is understood that it is envisaged that the vaccination of this cohort of children can proceed without the consent of parents. NAPTOSA is concerned with this aspect of the strategy, believing that the responsibility of parents and guardians for under-age children should not be ignored. We trust that Government will have a rethink on this matter, rather opting for an approach allowing the child's wish to be paramount where there is a difference of opinion between the parent/guardian and the child.

Be it as it may, we believe that parents would have noted the impact that the vaccination process of education staff has had on the education system and that this will prompt parents/ guardians to embrace the vaccination of this group of children and encourage them to acquire this protection for themselves, their families, and their communities.

The fact that the country is down to alert level 1 and that the infection rate has substantially subsided will hopefully not lead to inertia among parents and this group of children to opt for their vaccination.

NAPTOSA calls on the Minister of Basic Education to engage the Department of Health, parents, and the recognized education unions to combine forces in a joint strategy to maximize this vaccination initiative.

**BASIL MANUEL**  
**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**