VACCINATION FACT SHEET

Childhood Vaccinations

- Vaccines are the most effective way to prevent infectious diseases [CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) Online].
- Without vaccines, children are at risk for getting seriously ill and suffering pain, disability, and even death from diseases like measles and whooping cough [CDC Online].
- Approximately half of U.S. children are eligible for the Vaccines for Children (VFC) program and 86% of U.S. pediatricians provide care in a VFC-enrolled practice [HHS (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services) Online].
- The National Academy of Medicine reviewed the safety of 8 vaccines (varicella zoster vaccines; influenza vaccines; hepatitis B vaccines; human papillomavirus vaccines; measles, mumps, and rubella vaccine, hepatitis A vaccine, meningococcal vaccines and tetanus-containing vaccines that did not include whole-cell pertussis component [no US vaccine contain the whole-cell pertussis component currently]) on children and adults. The review found that with rare exceptions, these vaccines are very safe [CDC Online].
- Millions of children safely receive vaccines each year. The most common side effect is pain or swelling at the injection site [CDC Online].
- Serious side effects after vaccination, such as allergic reactions, are very rare and doctors and clinical staff are trained to deal with them [CDC Online].
- One vaccine ingredient that was studied exhaustively is thimerosal, a mercury-based preservative used to prevent germs (like bacteria and fungi) from contaminating multi-dose vials of vaccines. Research shows that vaccines containing thimerosal are not linked to ASD [CDC Online].
- Thimerosal has not been used in childhood vaccines since 2001. Thimerosal is sometimes used in flu vaccines. If you are concerned about thimerosal, you can request a flu vaccine without it.
- There is no link between common childhood vaccines and ASD in children.

COVID-19 Vaccinations

- COVID vaccines are safe and the most effective way to prevent or minimize COVID.
- Individuals with ASD are more susceptible to COVID-19 and should therefore be prioritized for vaccination [NCBI (National Center for Biotechnology Information) Online].
- There has been no negative impact on children 12 years and up who have been vaccinated.
- Clinical trials of a lower-dose COVID vaccine (Pfizer) have been conducted with children ages 5-11 and data shows that the vaccine has proven safe and effective in the trials, and children are now eligible to receive the vaccine.
- Those with ASD may be at higher risk for COVID-19 because they may have trouble understanding or following safety measures like wearing a mask or physical distancing and may have difficulty communicating symptoms of illness.

- People with developmental disabilities, such as autism, are more than three times as likely to die following a diagnosis of COVID-19 than others [NEJM (New England Journal of Medicine) Online].
- Hospitalization can be difficult for individuals with ASD. Vaccination is the best way to prevent a COVID-related hospitalization.