



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: March 18, 2021

Contact: Danny Hajjar, dhajjar@mrss.com

## As Covid vaccine trials in children continue, emotionally safe care must be a priority

***Not prioritizing emotional safety in children during medical experiences, including vaccinations, can have lifelong traumatic impacts***

(Washington, D.C.) —On Tuesday, [drug company Moderna announced it began a study that will test its Covid vaccine in children under 12](#), including babies as young as six months old. **In response to this news, Bailey Kasten, Interim CEO and COO for the [Association of Child Life Professionals](#), issued the following statement:**

*“As an organization, Association of Child Life Professionals applauds efforts to vaccinate children against COVID-19 as a step to protecting their health and the normalcy of childhood. As clinical trials for the Covid vaccine in children continue and we move towards mass vaccination, it’s critical that all who play a role in the development and distribution of the vaccine—from drug companies, to the national governments and state and provincial leaders—better prioritize steps to mitigate the trauma in children that can come from these medical experiences. This includes consulting with child life specialists during pediatric vaccine distribution planning and, where possible, bringing in the [support and expertise of child life services](#) found in a majority of children’s hospitals and many other medical and community settings across the country to ensure children have an emotionally safe experience.*

*“Not prioritizing emotional safety during a medical experience in the short-term has the potential to have [lifelong traumatic impacts](#). While advancing emotional safety is the responsibility of everyone in a medical setting, child life specialists have the proper training in psychosocial support to help children and families cope with stressful experiences in medical settings, and ultimately prevent or mitigate the harmful impacts of trauma.*

*“In addition to the vaccine often being administered in two doses, which can exacerbate the harmful emotional impact of medical procedures, vaccinations are also being rolled out in many spaces that children will return to post-pandemic—such as schools and community centers. We have the opportunity to prevent these spaces and experiences from becoming sources of trauma for children. [Effective coping strategies](#) including pain management techniques, developmentally appropriate language, and comfort positioning can be proactively shared with vaccine providers, clinicians, and parents. This critical vaccination effort should not be undermined by failing to provide emotionally safe care.*

*“We owe it to our children to take what we’ve learned during the initial rollout of the vaccine in adults and utilize the expertise of child life specialists to provide family-centered care. All stakeholders involved in the Covid vaccine development and distribution have a duty to set children up for a wholly safe patient*

*experience—and that must include having a plan that embeds emotional safety alongside physical safety from beginning to end.*

*“Failing to take an emotionally safe approach as vaccine trials in children continue and we move towards mass vaccination is not only irresponsible, it’s unethical.”*

For families who would like to locate child life services in your community, visit the Association of Child Life Professionals’ [Emotional Safety Initiative](#) website or [contact ACLP directly](#). To learn more about emotionally safe pediatric care, visit [emotional-safety.org](http://emotional-safety.org).

###

About the Association of Child Life Professionals

ACLP advances psychosocial care and the emotional safety of children, youth, and families impacted by healthcare and significant life experiences.