



**STATE OF TENNESSEE  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**  
ANDREW JOHNSON TOWER, 5TH FLOOR  
710 JAMES ROBERTSON PARKWAY  
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE 37243

**LISA PIERCEY, MD, MBA, FAAP**  
COMMISSIONER

**BILL LEE**  
GOVERNOR

May 17, 2021

Representative Robin Smith  
425 John Lewis Way N.  
Suite 644 Cordell Hull Bldg.  
Nashville, TN 37243

Dear Representative Smith:

The mature minor doctrine memo that was sent by Dr. Michelle Fiscus, our medical director of the Vaccine-Preventable Diseases and Immunization Program, was in response to numerous requests from healthcare providers wanting information about the legal requirements for providing COVID-19 vaccinations in Tennessee. There have been a variety of questions around the vaccines and the newest questions have centered around the recent approval for the Pfizer vaccine being eligible for administration to the 12-15 year age group. Medical providers are sometimes put in situations where a minor presents for a vaccination that has been recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) without a parent present. The mature minor doctrine establishes when it is appropriate for the minor to receive that vaccination at their request, without expressed parental permission. There are some exceptions to this rule as detailed in statute.

To help providers understand the law in Tennessee, Dr. Fiscus prepared a memo outlining the mature minor doctrine. The mature minor doctrine has been present in Tennessee since the 1980's and permits healthcare providers to treat certain minors without parental consent. You can find the current doctrine at [https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/health/documents/Mature\\_Minor\\_Doctrine.pdf](https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/health/documents/Mature_Minor_Doctrine.pdf). Tennessee is like many states in this regard, including several southeastern states such as Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, and South Carolina. While the Pfizer approval was the basis for this particular memo, the mature minor doctrine actually applies to a variety of healthcare services, but again with some exceptions.

We understand that the decision to provide a vaccination to a minor without parental consent may negatively impact the healthcare provider's relationship with the family, and as a result, many healthcare providers still choose to obtain parental consent prior to providing care to a minor. The mature minor doctrine simply allows a healthcare provider to give treatment when appropriate. We hope the memo informs the state's vaccinating partners of the current state of law in Tennessee so they may each make the best decisions for their patients.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lisa Piercey".

Lisa Piercey, MD, MBA, FAAP  
Commissioner