

Boosting the Public Discourse

Evidence-Based Strategies for Reframing Child and Adolescent Vaccination

Julie Sweetland, PhD, Senior Advisor



FrameWorks is on a mission...

to advance the nonprofit sector's capacity

to **frame the public discourse** on social and scientific issues

Today I'm sharing the work of a team

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Conducted in partnership with AAP



Reframing the Conversation about Child and Adolescent Vaccinations

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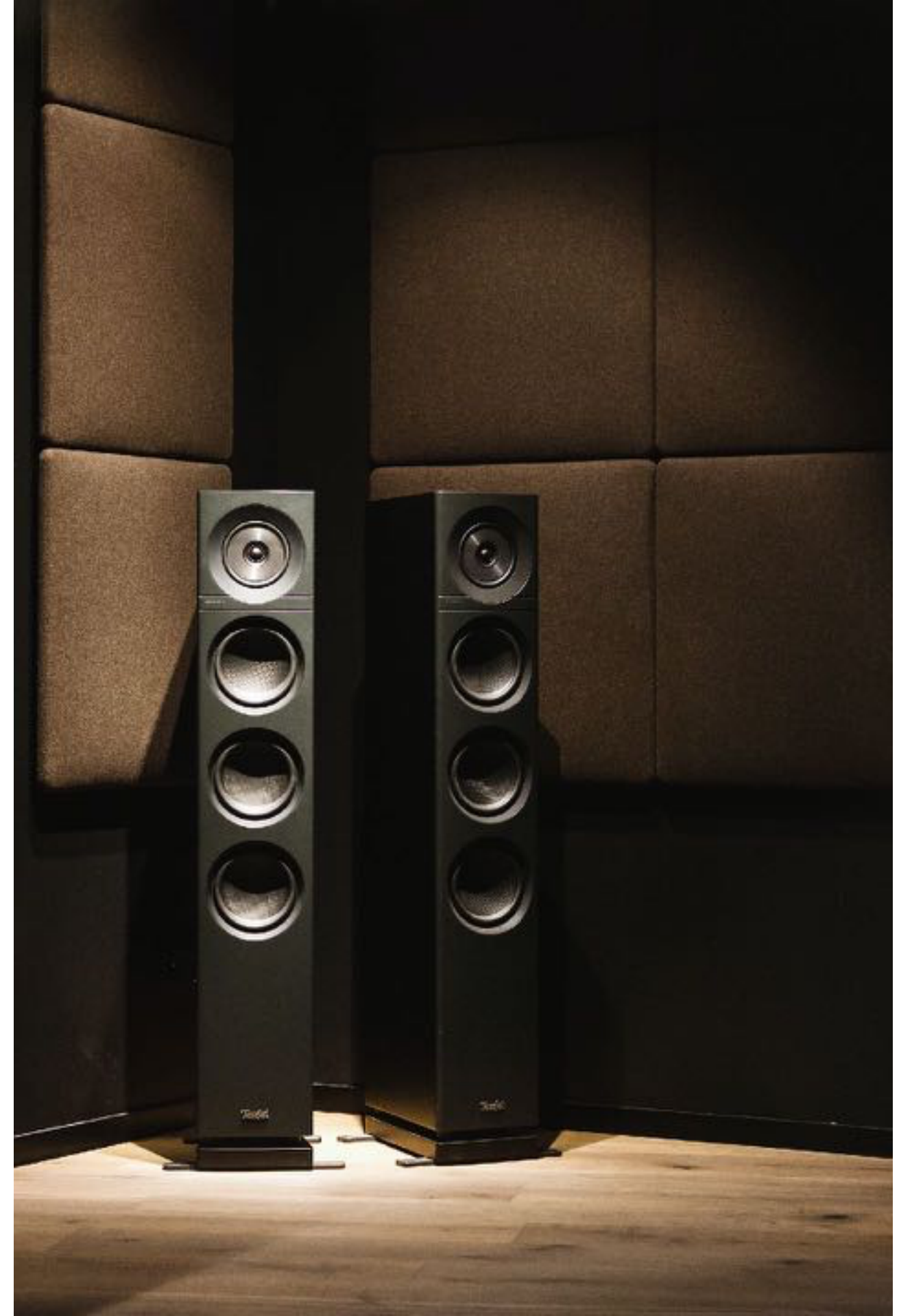
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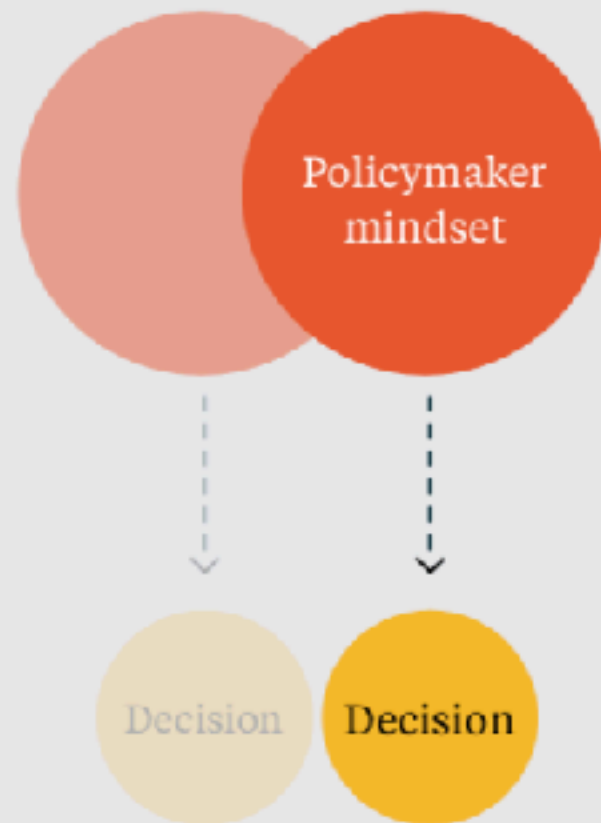
JANUARY 2023

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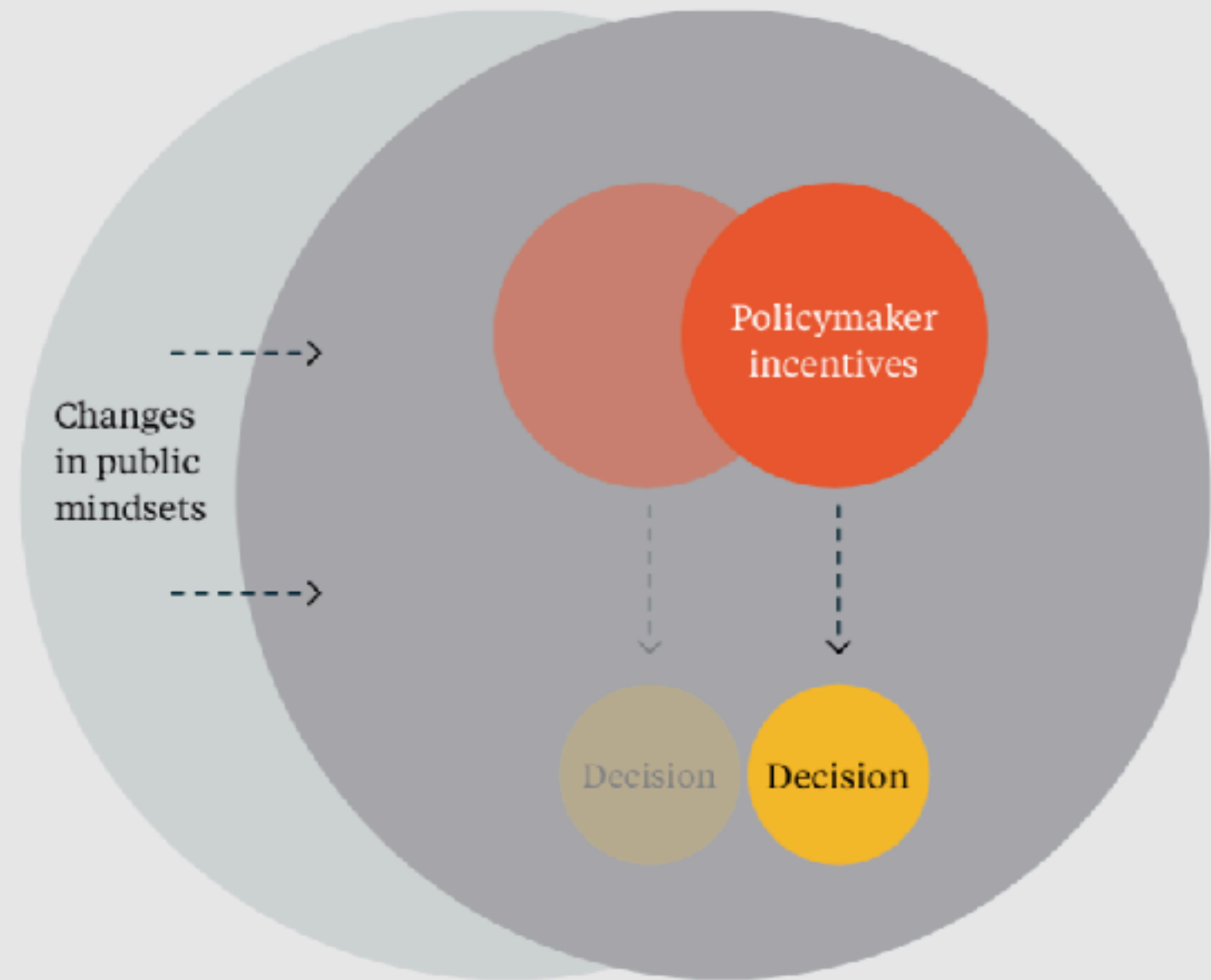
**our project is
about changing
the cultural
surround sound**



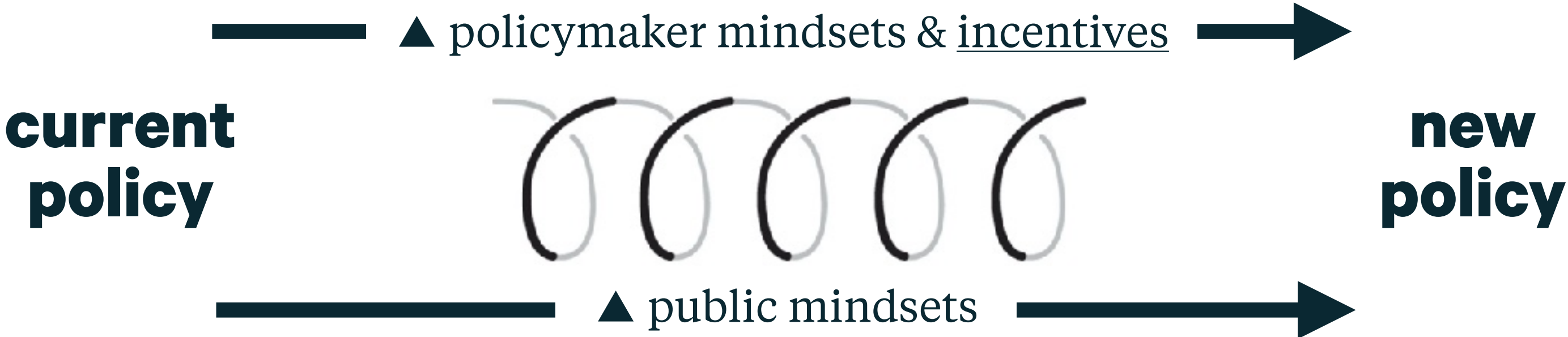
**Policy is changed
either via a change in
a policymaker's mindset,**



**or when public mindsets create
pressure on a policymaker
to make a different decision.**



Ideally...



Our multi-method approach queried over 9500 ordinary Americans

descriptive research



*Expert Interviews
Literature Review*

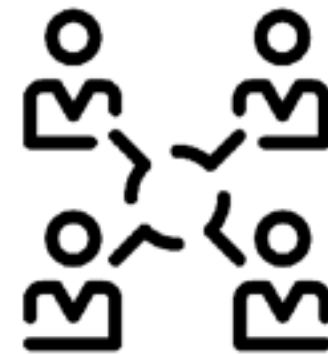


*In-Depth
Interviews with Public*

reframing research



*Tool
Design*



*Peer Discourse
Sessions*



*On-the-Street
Interviews*



*Controlled Survey
Experiments*

Examples of communications outcomes we tested for



knowledge

A vaccine is effective if it prevents a vaccinated person from getting seriously ill with the disease.



attitudes

We, as a society, are responsible for making sure that all children get vaccinated.



policy preferences

We should set up federally funded vaccination centers that operate year-round in every community in the U.S.

Less of this

benefits outweighing risks

“their” low rates of uptake

protection from disease

how vaccines fight disease

More of this!

benefits to the community

our responsibility for access

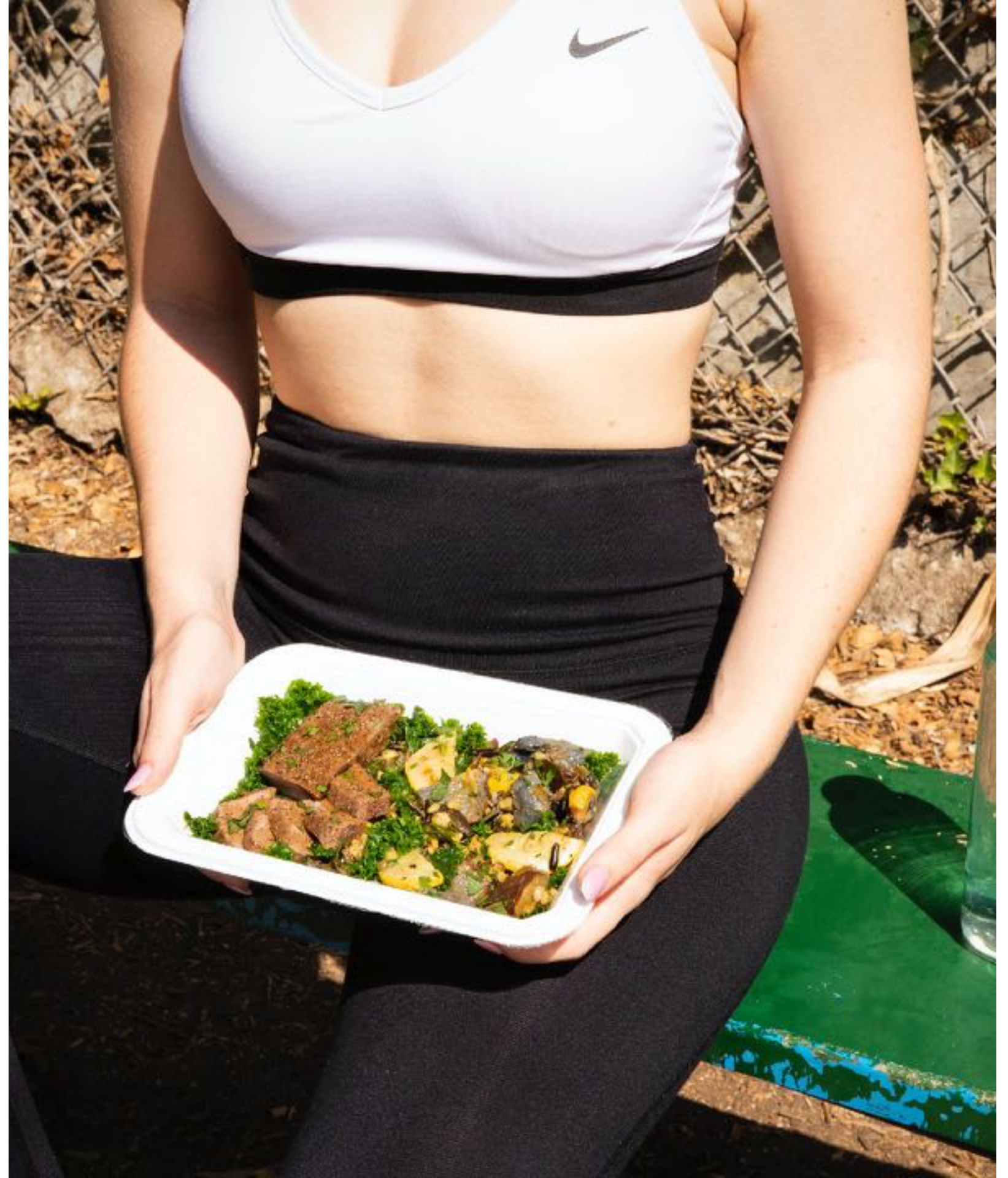
preparation for healthy childhood

how immune systems prepare themselves

Key recommendation

Talk about the benefits of vaccination for the common good.

**people think
about health
in highly
individualistic
ways**



**to make the case
for a public
response, we need
to talk in terms of
public health**



Less of this

As pediatricians, we are speaking up about the facts not to scare you or coerce you, but to emphasize the importance of vaccinating your child. We know the decision can be emotional, but should you have doubts, please discuss these with your primary physician.

More of this!

As pediatricians, we want to speak up about the importance of developing “community immunity” through vaccination. When our immune systems are prepared to immediately recognize and resist highly contagious diseases, it is harder for illness to spread.

Less of this

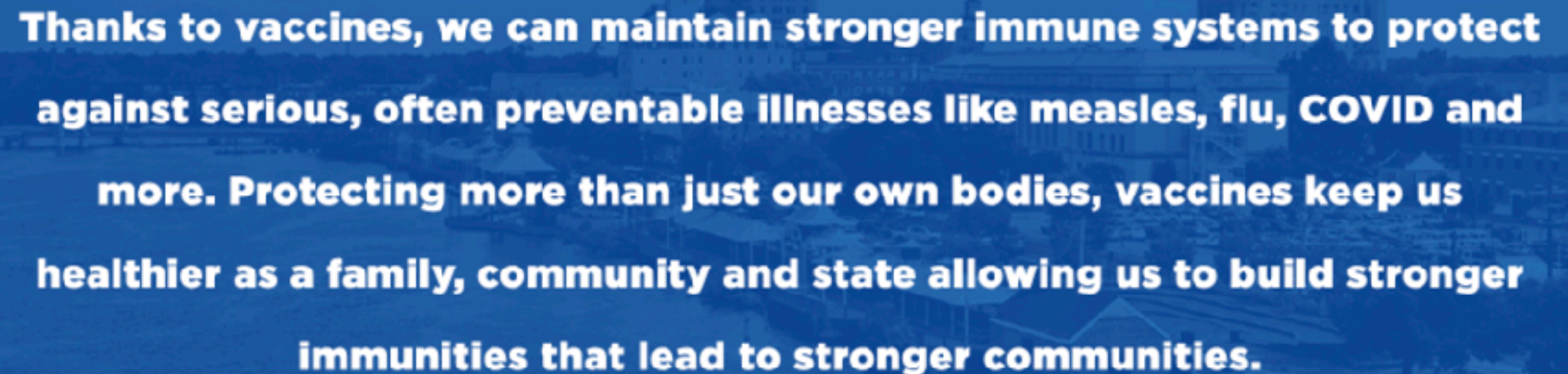
Vaccines are not only safe, they are highly effective, protecting your children from dangerous, disabling, and even deadly diseases. To keep ourselves, our children, and our loved ones safe, we need all families to vaccinate their kids. Talk to your doctor if you have questions.

More of this!

In Ohio, we value each other and our communities. We step up when our communities need us. It's important we translate that into making sure that everyone — especially children — has full access to vaccination services.



**stronger
immunities.
stronger
communities.**



Thanks to vaccines, we can maintain stronger immune systems to protect against serious, often preventable illnesses like measles, flu, COVID and more. Protecting more than just our own bodies, vaccines keep us healthier as a family, community and state allowing us to build stronger immunities that lead to stronger communities.



COMMUNITY

“When children are vaccinated our whole community benefits. High childhood vaccination rates create widespread immunity, which protects the health of everyone. By coming together to support vaccination programs, our community can ensure that all children have the opportunity to grow up healthy and strong.”

Key recommendation

Talk about improving vaccination access as a preventive public health measure.

**people don't see
the practical
barriers to
getting kids
vaccinated**



It matters how we talk about what “we” should do



We are failing
to get vaccinated



We are failing
to provide access



We have a responsibility
to provide access





WIDESPREAD ACCESS FOR PREVENTION

“When everyone can access the recommended immunizations on time, it stops preventable diseases from spreading through our communities.”



REMOVE PRACTICAL BARRIERS TO ACCESS

“We must make sure that childhood vaccinations are widely available, easy to find, and affordable to everyone. That might mean changing clinic locations, changing insurance reimbursement policies, or more. It’s on us to remove the barriers that families run into when trying to get kids vaccinated.”

Less of this

Across the nation, health care providers are getting more and more questions from families about whether vaccinations are safe for their children. Doctors, nurses, and researchers agree: the answer is yes, in general, vaccinations are safe and effective. (Some children have severe allergies or immune system conditions that make them the rare exception to the rule.)

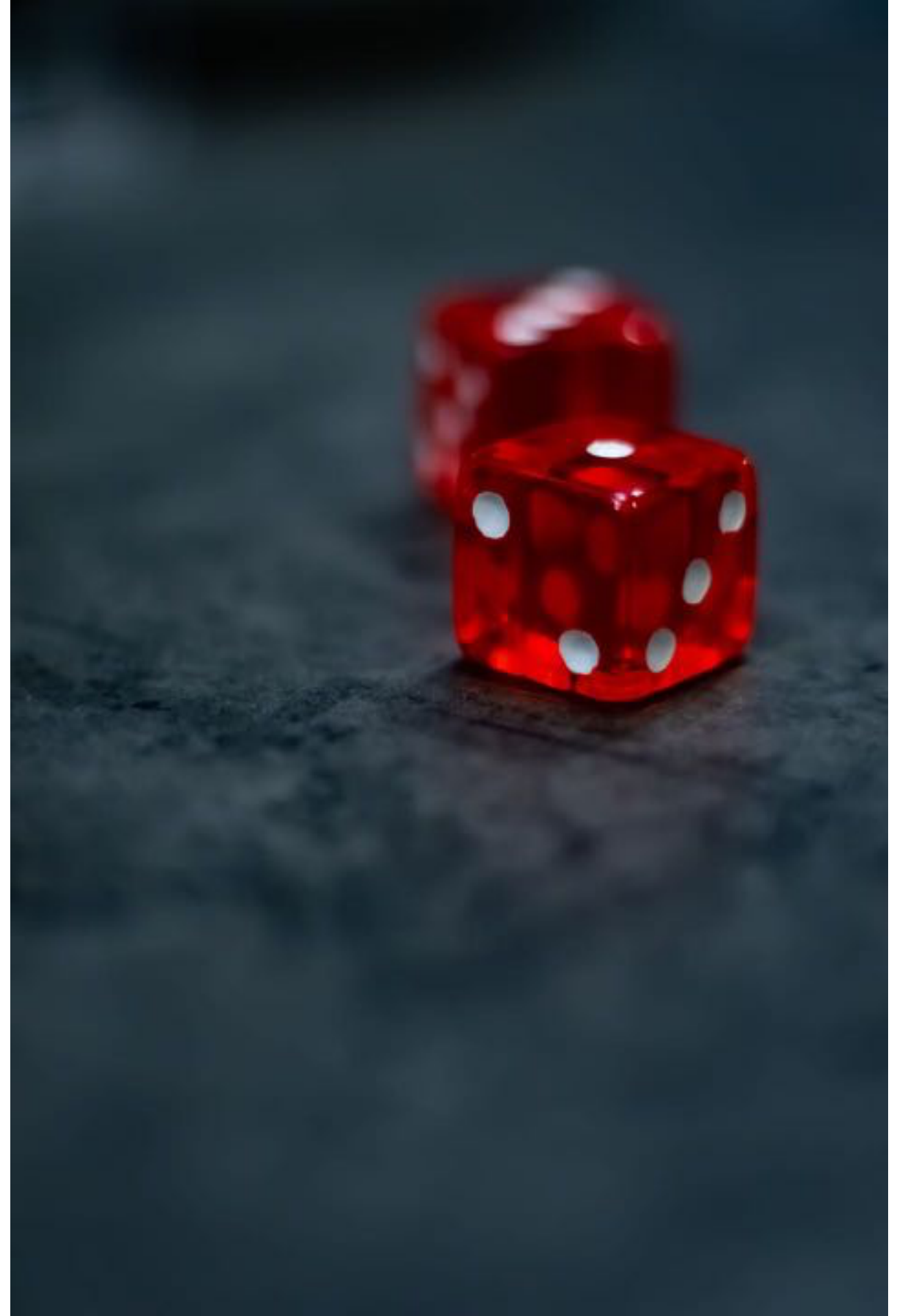
More of this!

Across the nation, health care providers are hearing more and more stories from families about practical difficulties in keeping up or catching up on routine immunizations. Issues range from a lack of insurance coverage to the ability to attend multiple appointments. We have a responsibility to make vaccinations for children affordable and accessible.

Key recommendation

Talk more about the long-term child wellbeing that vaccines promote.

**people think
about vaccines
in terms of
risk - reward**



**right now,
the ‘rewards’
are intangible
for the public**



When we try to counter misinformation with **paternalism**, we further erode public trust in institutions and evidence.



**Framed with
'protection from disease'**

On-time vaccination throughout childhood is essential because it helps provide immunity before children are exposed to potentially life-threatening diseases.

**Reframed with
'preparation for development'**

Vaccinations prepare children's immune systems to recognize and resist contagious diseases, keeping them healthy so they can keep growing, learning, and thriving.



PLATFORM FOR CHILD HEALTH

“When kids stay healthy, they can focus on growing, learning, and doing the things they love to do. By keeping kids on track developmentally, immunization sets young people up for long-term health and wellbeing.”



SAMPLE LETTER TO THE EDITOR

As a pediatrician, I specialize in keeping children healthy. Nothing brings me more joy than seeing my young patients thriving, growing, and learning. That's why I think of vaccinations—as routine as they may be—as a vital part of my service to children, families, and our community.

Vaccinations prepare children's immune systems to recognize and respond to serious diseases, and they also protect society at large.

Key recommendation

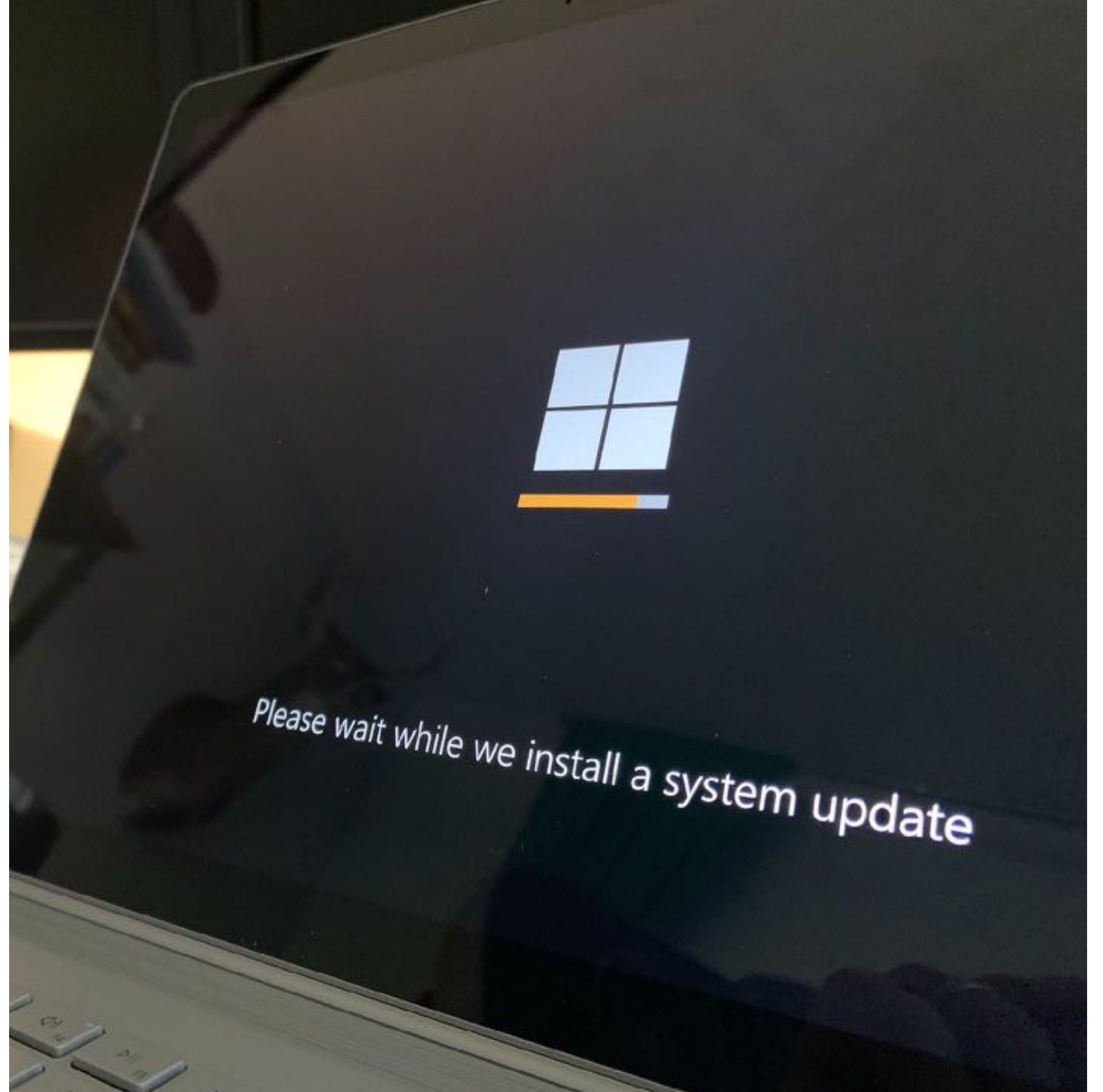
Shift the focus from vaccines fighting disease to the immune system preparing itself.

When we rely on **military language**, people conclude that any transmission of disease indicates a failure of the vaccine.

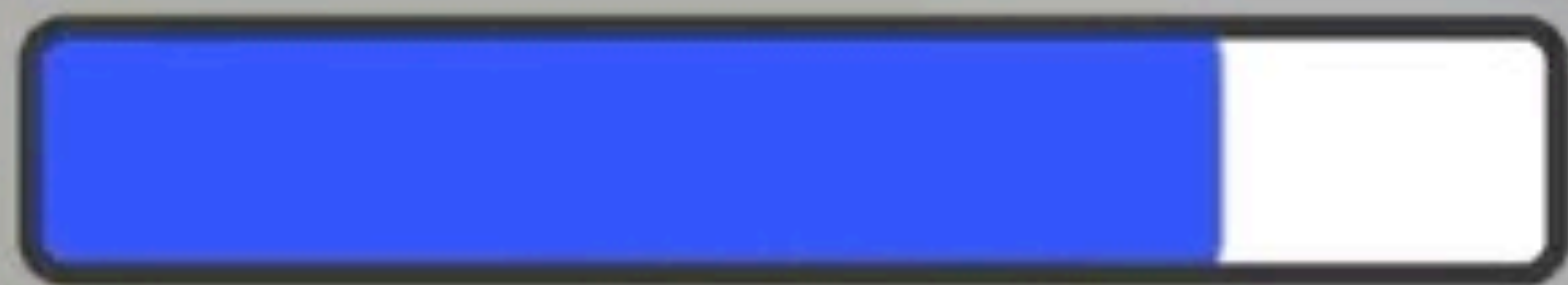


Photo by [Kevin Schmid](#) on [Unsplash](#)

When we **compare vaccinations to computer updates**, we call up productive associations like prevention, ongoing maintenance, and protection against “network” threats.



Immune System



that same love and attention.

Example Narrative: Vaccines for Children Program

1. Principle

Child Development

When children are healthy, they can focus on learning and just being kids. Infectious diseases can pull them away from developmental tasks.

2. Process

“Network”

Just like the latest anti-virus software protects our computer networks, widespread vaccinations keep kids from getting and spreading serious diseases.

3. Problem

Access Barriers

But too many families run into challenges keeping up with recommended schedule. They may delay due to cost. Others have questions, which pediatricians want to answer—but that takes time.

4. Proposal

Expand Access

Support & encourage doctors to answer families' questions by updating reimbursement policies

Ensure that cost is never a barrier for families

Example Narrative #2: School Entry Requirements

1. Principle

Child Development

When children are healthy, they can focus on learning and just being kids.

Infectious diseases can pull them away from developmental tasks.

2. Process

“Network”

Just like the latest anti-virus software protects our computer networks, widespread vaccinations keep kids from getting and spreading serious diseases.

3. Problem

“Network Vulnerability”

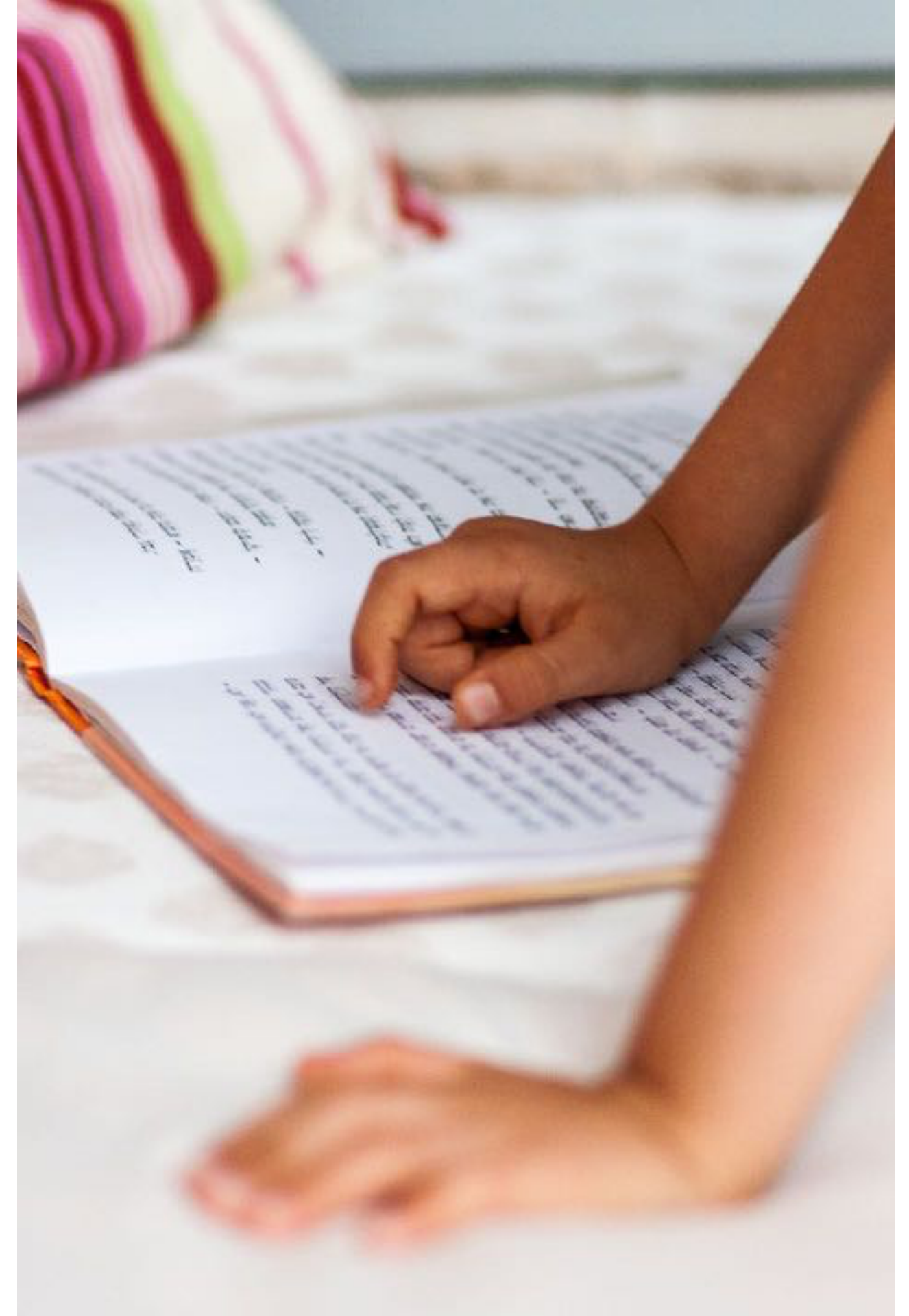
In schools and child care centers, every child’s immune system should be up-to-date with recommended vaccines. Otherwise, the group is vulnerable to outbreaks.

4. Proposal

Require vaccinations to enroll

Support strong immunization requirements, with only medically necessary exemptions.

When we **compare gaining immunity to gaining literacy**, we tap into beliefs that the ability to read benefits both individuals and society, and that it's best to gain literacy in childhood.





BEGINNER TEXTS / LITERACY

“When we immunize children, it’s a lot like helping them learn to read. Vaccines are beginner texts that our immune systems use to practice “reading” a disease. Once our immune systems can understand the disease, they can respond quickly when they encounter it—and resist right away.”

A woman with short dark hair, wearing a black top and large hoop earrings, is speaking directly to the camera in an office environment. The background shows a desk with a printer, a filing cabinet, and a door. An orange banner is overlaid at the bottom of the frame.

**After exposure to the
Literacy metaphor**

Less of this

benefits outweighing risks

“their” low rates of uptake

protection from disease

how vaccines fight disease

More of this!

benefits to the common good

our responsibility for access

preparation for healthy childhood

how immune systems prepare themselves

Keep learning with us!

Access our...

- Reports
- Toolkit
- Recorded webinars



Access our three applied research reports

**What the American Public
Thinks About Vaccines
and How Framing Can Help.
A Literature Review.**

April 2021

**FRAME
WORKS**

A literature review sponsored by
the American Academy of Pediatrics


**Communicating About
Vaccination in the United
States: A FrameWorks
Strategic Brief**

September 2021

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In partnership with the American Academy of Pediatrics



**Reframing the Conversation
about Child and Adolescent
Vaccinations**

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**FRAME
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Get guidance from two communications toolkits



Toolkit

Boosting Public Discourse: Reframing Childhood Immunization

Find guidance and resources to advocate for expanding access to childhood and adolescent vaccination.



Toolkit

Building Family Confidence in the COVID-19 Vaccine

Framing Strategies for School Nurses



The advocates' message tends to be complicated rather than simple, longer rather than shorter, and contrary to rather than consistent with popular understanding...

For the most part, this means that we have to explain, our opponents just have to state; we need to change people's minds, they just need to reinforce what people already think; we need to emphasize shared responsibility, they just need to highlight personal choice.



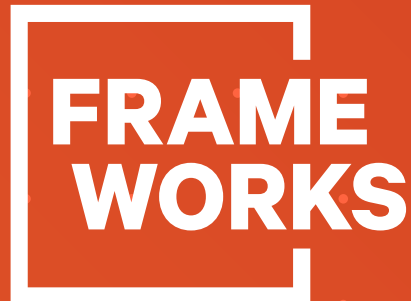
–Wallack, Lawrence, Lori Dorfman, David Jernigan, and Makani The
Media Advocacy and Public Health - Power for Prevention, 1993.

Thank you!

Let's continue the conversation.

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FrameWorksInst



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