

CMS Federal Vaccine Mandate



Background

On Nov. 5, 2021, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services [released](#) the [interim final rule](#) with a comment period requiring COVID-19 vaccination of eligible staff at health care facilities participating in Medicare and Medicaid programs. The requirement applies to approximately 76,000 providers and covers more than 17 million health care workers across the country. The requirement impacts Medicare entities regulated by CMS (such as hospitals, hospices, rural health clinics, etc.). All eligible staff are required to have their first dose of a two-dose COVID-19 vaccine or a one-dose vaccine by Dec. 5, 2021, before providing any care, treatment or other services. Full vaccination, without an approved exemption, is required for all eligible staff by Jan. 4, 2022.

Sample Internal Talking Points - use the ones that work for your hospital.

- Our hospital is taking steps to meet the federal mandate so we can continue to provide health care in our community.
- Our hospital has been communicating staff feedback to our state association, federal and state elected leaders, as well as our partnering organizations. Your ongoing comments are valued and continue to be shared.
- To those already vaccinated, thank you for taking this safe, effective step. To those not yet vaccinated, please schedule your vaccination before the Dec. 5 deadline or complete a medical or religious exemption request form.
- CMS has issued a vaccine mandate to promote safety and protection from COVID-19 at health care facilities.
- CMS outlined the thorough process it used before issuing a federal vaccine mandate. Evidence has shown vaccines provide the best protection against severe infection, hospitalization and death.
- We are putting plans and policies in place to meet the federal requirements.
- This requirement is similar to other requirements of employment including flu vaccinations and being up-to-date on MMR and tetanus inoculation, all of which promote patient and staff safety.
- As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, vaccines represent a powerful tool to help prevent serious infection, hospitalization and death. We believe they are vital in protecting you—our employees, providers and associates—as well as our patients and community.
- We believe vaccination is the effective way to reduce the incidence and severity of COVID-19. Doing so is in the safety interests of our employees, patients and families.
- In most cases, the benefits of the approved COVID-19 vaccines outweigh any identified risks or side effects.

- We understand some individuals may have health concerns about the vaccine. If you have questions, we encourage you to reach out to your health care provider. Many health care providers are knowledgeable and equipped to address any questions and concerns you may have.
- Many of you have voiced diverse opinions and perspectives. We encourage you to reach out to your health care provider if we have not been able to address your concerns about vaccinations.
- We appreciate the variety of opinions expressed on this topic. We continue to discuss with employees their thoughts and questions ahead of the Dec. 5, 2021, deadline.
- We believe having a fully vaccinated health care workforce is the right thing to do for our patients and for each other.
- Our purpose is to provide safe care for our patients and community. Every one of you is essential to accomplishing our mission.
- COVID-19 vaccines will help protect you and your family against severe illness, hospitalization and death.
- COVID-19 vaccines will help protect you, your coworkers and patients from spreading COVID-19.
- We encourage our team to come together and act upon the best available medical evidence.
- We also ask you to support each other with kindness, sensitivity and professionalism.
- Thank you for everything you do and for your dedication to our patients.
- We ask that you extend grace and civility to one another, and model our values in every interaction with colleagues, patients and families.

Hospitals might consider organizing your messages by identified goals ... such as:

Goals and Key Messages

- Ensure clarity of details.
 - All eligible staff are required to have their first dose of a two-dose COVID-19 vaccine or a one-dose vaccine by Dec. 5, 2021.
 - Requests for exemptions for medical and religious reasons will be review by X.
 - December X will be the last day to turn in medical and religious exemption requests.
 - Individuals who receive an exemption will be required to (weekly testing, PPE requirements, social distance, non-patient work environment.)
 - Please contact X with questions.



- Center communications around supporting and caring for our staff.
 - The majority of our staff has signaled through already high vaccination rates that they wish to work in a safe environment.
 - The COVID-19 vaccine has shown to protect those who have received it without risk to themselves.
 - The vaccine allows you to protect those closest to you.

- Reinforce the responsibility inherent to health care providers.
 - Not all people can get the vaccine due to health care or religious reasons. We must do what it takes to protect and provide care to those we serve.
 - The vaccine requirement helps keep our staff, community members and patients safe.
 - As health care providers, many of our employees have already received the vaccine as a part of their duty to their health care profession. To help protect our patients and our community, our staff must be protected and do no harm.

- Remind all that requiring vaccination is not a new concept for hospitals.
 - Each year we ask our providers and staff, on and off campus, remote or in person, to get their flu vaccine. Similarly, rules apply for those who for health and religious reasons cannot receive vaccines.
 - This requirement is similar to other requirements of employment including flu vaccinations and being up-to-date on MMR and tetanus inoculation, all of which help promote patient and staff safety.

- Align the requirement with the current situation in the community.
 - COVID-19 is difficult to control because people can carry and transmit the virus without showing symptoms.
 - We need a healthy and present workforce; vaccinations help keep our staff working. This is also important for surrounding hospitals, so if we need to transfer a patient they have a staffed bed to take them.
 - The majority of COVID-19 infections we are seeing are primarily unvaccinated people.

- Leverage our cultural beliefs.
 - The health and safety of our staff, our patients and our community will always be number one.
 - No blame game – you can be very careful (and vaccinated) and still end up with COVID-19. Support our colleagues as breakthrough cases occur.

- Instill hope and diminish anxiety around the vaccine for our staff.
 - Vaccine mandates represent a way to protect you and your loved ones.
 - If you have questions or concerns, we have providers who can help.

