



August 26, 2021

**ILLINOIS HEALTH AND HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION  
MEMORANDUM**

**SUBJECT: IHA COVID-19 Update: State Announces Vaccination, Mask Requirements**

Today, in response to rising COVID-19 cases driven by the delta variant, Governor J.B. Pritzker and Illinois Dept. of Public Health (IDPH) Director Dr. Ngozi Ezike announced statewide vaccination requirements for individuals in high-risk settings, including hospitals, and mask requirements for all Illinois residents in indoor settings. The Governor also issued [Executive Order \(EO\) 2021-20 \(COVID EO No. 87\)](#) spelling out various definitions for the requirements.

In making the announcement, the Governor and Dr. Ezike pointed out that regions with low vaccination rates continue to see a concerning surge of COVID-19 hospitalizations.

The order applies to all healthcare workers and the definition is broad. “Health Care Worker” means any person who (1) is employed by, volunteers for, or is contracted to provide services for a Health Care Facility, or is employed by an entity that is contracted to provide services to a Health Care Facility, and (2) is in close contact (fewer than 6 feet) with other persons in the facility for more than 15 minutes at least once a week on a regular basis as determined by the Health Care Facility.

“Health Care Facility” means any institution, building, or agency, or portion of an institution, building or agency, whether public or private (for-profit or nonprofit), that is used, operated or designed to provide health services, medical treatment or nursing, or rehabilitative or preventive care to any person or persons. This includes, but is not limited to, hospitals, ambulatory surgical treatment centers, physician offices, free-standing emergency centers, hospices, urgent care centers, end-stage renal disease facilities, and long-term care facilities.

All healthcare workers, including hospital and nursing home employees, will now be required to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. Healthcare workers who are not vaccinated – including those with an approved medical or religious exemption – will be required to get tested for COVID-19 at least once per week in order to have access to the facility where they are employed. IDPH may require increased testing in certain situations.

Workers in applicable settings must receive the first dose of a two-dose vaccination series or a single-dose vaccination by Sunday, September 5, 2021. Second doses of the vaccine must be received by 30 days after the first dose. Workers who do not receive the vaccine, including those who are exempted for medical reasons or based on a sincerely held religious belief, must

follow a routine testing schedule to detect cases early and prevent further spread. For these individuals, testing will be required a minimum of once per week in healthcare facilities. The frequency of testing may be increased in the event of positive cases. IHA's reading of the Executive Order leads to the conclusion that testing of unvaccinated individuals must commence on September 5.

Under the order, workers are required to provide proof of vaccination to their employer. Healthcare workers who do not provide proof of vaccination will be prevented from entering healthcare facilities unless they follow the required testing protocol.

The Executive Order also states that nothing in the order prohibits any entity from implementing vaccination mandates or testing requirements for personnel, contractors, students or other visitors that exceed the requirements of the order. This provision sets a floor for vaccination policies, while allowing all organizations that are already implementing stricter vaccine requirement policies to proceed.

As a reminder, because of the varying approaches by hospitals across the state and the unique circumstances in each individual hospital and each community, the IHA Board of Trustees has not taken a position on mandatory vaccination policies.

For those hospitals and health systems that have not implemented a mandatory vaccination policy, this order requires that vaccine compliance for each employee will need to be tracked, and a weekly testing program will need to be stood up for those employees who are not fully vaccinated.

However, a growing number of Illinois hospitals and health systems have announced mandatory policies and how this new announcement overlays with your individual announced mandatory policy will vary. IHA's interpretation is that, regardless of your policy and your implementation date, testing of employees who are not fully vaccinated, as well as those who have been approved for exemptions, will need to commence on September 5.

The only consequence contained in the order for employees who choose not to be vaccinated is the requirement of being tested once a week. Failure to test makes the employee ineligible to enter the facility. IHA does not read anything in the order that prohibits an employee from entering the facility during the time between when the test is administered and the time the test result is returned.

It is not clear from the announcement today, or from subsequent conversations, how the costs of a potentially extensive testing program will be covered or whether there will be opportunities for reimbursement.

To see a video replay and PowerPoint presentation of the announcement, go to the [Governor's Facebook page](#). The video runs about 30 minutes.

IHA will continue to seek clarity on the impact of this Executive Order and will continue to provide additional information as it becomes available.

If you have questions or comments, please [contact IHA](#).