



AHCA/NCAL Issues Policy Statement Regarding COVID-19 Vaccinations of Long Term Care Personnel

The American Health Care Association and National Center for Assisted Living (AHCA/NCAL), representing more than 14,000 nursing homes and other long term care facilities across the country, released the following policy statement today regarding COVID-19 vaccinations for those working in long term care facilities:

America's nursing homes, assisted living communities and other long term care facilities have been at the forefront of the COVID-19 pandemic. The development of effective and safe vaccines has dramatically reduced COVID-19 cases and the severity of illness in long term care. However, as the highly contagious Delta variant spreads, unvaccinated individuals remain at high risk and can spread the virus to others, including vaccinated individuals. Our residents are some of the most vulnerable individuals to the consequences of contracting COVID-19.

To protect all residents, staff and others in our communities from the known and substantial risks of COVID-19, AHCA/NCAL strongly urges the vaccination of all health care personnel. COVID-19 vaccines protect health care personnel when working both in health care facilities and in the community. They provide strong protection against workers unintentionally carrying the disease to work and spreading it to patients and peers.

Long term care providers have worked tirelessly to improve uptake among both residents and staff. In December, AHCA/NCAL launched the #GetVaccinated campaign to encourage uptake among both residents and staff. Providers continue to work with their staff and residents to educate, offer and encourage COVID-19 vaccination. As a result, we have seen a steady increase in vaccination rates, but more needs to be done.

AHCA/NCAL also supports all providers that adopt mandatory COVID-19 vaccination policies for health care personnel, with state and local regulations and circumstances shaping whether and how these policies are implemented. Each state and facility must make the best decision for their specific circumstances. The pandemic has already exacerbated workforce challenges that long term care providers has faced for years. Vaccine mandates may further challenge providers trying to recruit and retain a qualified workforce. We renew our call for state and federal governments to enact solutions to help address these long-standing workforce challenges.

AHCA/NCAL encourages long term care providers who are implementing mandatory COVID-19 vaccination policies to:

- Provide exemptions for medical reasons and accommodations consistent with Federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission guidelines (e.g., a sincerely held religious belief, practice or observance);
- Follow relevant Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) infection control guidelines, Occupational Safety and Health Administration requirements, and other federal and state regulations regarding use of personal protective equipment and other infection control practices for unvaccinated staff receiving an exemption or accommodation. For example, unvaccinated personnel may be required

to wear a mask at all times even if CDC guidelines and OSHA requirements were to relax mask requirements for vaccinated personnel;

- Ensure the policy is implemented in a manner consistent with local and state laws;
- Follow requirements and guidelines from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and CDC on which individuals are eligible and should be prioritized for vaccination;
- Monitor national safety and efficacy data for all FDA authorized or approved vaccines in use;
- Continue providing education about the efficacy and safety of COVID-19 vaccines to encourage staff to obtain the vaccine voluntarily in a culturally sensitive and appropriate manner; and
- Offer scheduling flexibility and/or time off to ensure personnel have time to obtain the vaccine and recover from its possible side effects.