



Vaccine mandate updates

DATE: November 17, 2021
TO: All Employees
FROM: Jeff Paterson, Chief Executive Officer
RE: Federal vaccine mandate updates

As I shared with you in a November 5 memo, the federal government has released details on the vaccine mandate for employers. There have been important developments. Please read carefully.

For employees of all programs EXCEPT ICFs

The federal courts have “stayed” -- or frozen -- the OSHA mandate that applies to organizations with 100 or more employees. If you work in any part of Empower other than ICFs, you do not need to comply with the vaccine mandate. You do not need to request a religious or medical exemption. This part of the mandate could be reinstated at some point in the future; we will let you know if that happens.

For employees working in ICFs

The vaccine mandate for employees who work in ICFs is still in place. All employees with regular duties in ICFs, as well as contracted therapists, must receive their first vaccine dose by December 5, 2021; if receiving the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine, employees must receive their second vaccine dose by January 4, 2022. This mandate applies not only to our ICFs, but to all healthcare facilities in the United States.

Medical exemptions for ICF employees

If you work in an ICF and believe you should be exempted from the vaccine due to a medical condition for which vaccines are contraindicated, please provide a written explanation signed by your physician. The request will be reviewed by administrative staff and our medical director, and a decision will be made by Empower. Your exemption request must be submitted to your supervisor or to the Human Resources Department by November 23, 2021. Submitting a request does not guarantee approval. If your exemption is approved, you will be required to undergo weekly COVID-19 testing at your own expense and wear appropriate Personal Protective Equipment.

Religious exemptions for ICF employees

If you work in an ICF and believe that receiving the COVID-19 vaccine conflicts with your sincerely held religious beliefs, please fill out, sign and submit the COVID-19 Vaccine Religious Exemption Request Form that can be found at <https://empower-wny.org/news-events/covid-19-response/> under “Vaccine Information for Staff.” Your exemption request must be submitted to your supervisor or to the Human Resources Department by November 23, 2021. Submitting a request does not guarantee approval. If your exemption is approved, you will be required to undergo weekly COVID-19 testing at your own expense and wear appropriate Personal Protective Equipment.

How to Be Vaccinated/Cash Incentive

Empower continues to offer a \$500 cash incentive to fully vaccinated employees who have regular contact with the people we support. We will soon be announcing a deadline for the cash incentive.

Vaccination is our best protection against serious illness, hospitalization and death due to COVID-19. COVID-19 vaccines are free. Most pharmacies offer walk-in vaccine access, or you can visit www.niagaracounty.com/health to register for local clinics held by the Niagara County Health Department.

Please contact the Human Resources Department or your supervisor with questions. Thank you.