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Governor Wolf Announces ‘Vaccine or Test’ Requirement for Commonwealth Employees in Health Care and High-Risk Congregate Facilities

Encourages State Employees to Get Vaccinated with Incentive

Harrisburg, PA – Governor Tom Wolf today announced that commonwealth employees in state health care facilities and high-risk congregate care facilities will be required to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 by September 7, 2021. Individuals who are not vaccinated will be required to undergo weekly COVID-19 testing. Additionally, beginning September 7, all new external hires in these facilities must be vaccinated before commencing employment.

This initiative will affect approximately 25,000 employees working in 24-hour-operated state facilities including state hospitals, state homes for people with intellectual disabilities, veterans homes, community health centers, and state correction institutions.

“Throughout the pandemic, we have learned that the COVID-19 virus thrives in settings where people live in close proximity such as congregate care. These individuals are often our most vulnerable Pennsylvanians who are unable to leave these facilities and rely on the direct care of the staff. We want our residents and their loved ones to have peace of mind that we are doing everything we can to keep them safe,” said Gov Wolf. “It is our responsibility to do our part to protect our most vulnerable neighbors and stop the spread of this highly contagious virus.”

In addition to the "vaccine or test" requirement, Governor Wolf announced a vaccine incentive for state employees under the governor's jurisdiction. Starting October 1, 2021, all vaccinated state employees under the governor's jurisdiction are eligible for an additional 7.5 or 8 hours paid time off. The Office of Administration will work with employees and agencies to develop a mechanism for employees to confirm proof of vaccination.

The Wolf Administration is actively working with state employee unions on implementation of these policies.

“As a leading employer in Pennsylvania, the commonwealth must stand up and provide an example for other businesses to follow,” said Gov. Wolf. “It is vitally important that employees have the confidence that they can safely work and serve their fellow Pennsylvanians. Even more importantly, we hope this incentive will help Pennsylvanians stay healthy and safe from dangerous variants of COVID-19.”

Gov. Wolf was joined by Lancaster General Hospital’s (LGH) Chief Medical Officer Dr. Michael Ripchinski who spoke on the importance of vaccinations and the efficacy of the COVID-19 vaccine. As part of the University of Pennsylvania Health System (UPHS), LGH is working to educate and vaccinate all employees and clinical staff by September 1, 2021, as part of UPHS’ COVID-19 vaccine mandate.

Currently, more than 63% of Pennsylvanians 18 and older are fully vaccinated, with the state ranking fifth among all 50 states for total doses administered.

“Pennsylvania has had a lot of success in our vaccination efforts, but 63% is not the goal,” said Gov. Wolf. “Sixty-three percent still leaves far too many eligible Pennsylvanians unvaccinated, which puts their communities at risk. Vaccines are free, available, and effective. I encourage every eligible Pennsylvanian who hasn’t gotten vaccinated to sign up today.”

All Pennsylvanians ages 12 and older are eligible to schedule a COVID-19 vaccine. Use [Vaccine Finder](#) to find a COVID-19 vaccine provider near you.

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