



Mandatory Employee and Student Vaccinations

Frequently asked questions

COVID-19 Vaccine

Why is Sanford mandating the COVID vaccine before it is FDA approved?

The vaccines all have Emergency Use Authorization, which is a form of FDA approval that allows for the manufacturing and approval of vaccines to be streamlined in a public health emergency. It is important to remember that no shortcuts were taken in the research or clinical studies conducted. In fact, the COVID vaccines were extensively researched by individuals with decades of experience understanding immune response and how vaccines work. The vaccines were subject to clinical trials involving thousands of participants. Medical experts with many years of experience regulating vaccines evaluated information about the safety, effectiveness, and manufacturing quality as part of the FDA's authorization process. The FDA continues to monitor these vaccines very closely for safety. More than 160 million people in the U.S. have been fully vaccinated with minimal severe reactions.

Isn't it a HIPAA/Privacy violation to ask an employee or student if they are vaccinated?

Inquiring about vaccination status and requiring a vaccine complies with privacy laws such as HIPAA, employment discrimination laws, and constitutional protections.

Is it legal to require employees and students to get a COVID vaccine?

Federal law allows employers to mandate vaccines, including the COVID-19 vaccine, provided that medical and religious exemptions are offered. Like all employee medical information, documentation or other confirmation of COVID-19 vaccination collected by Sanford will be maintained confidentially and separate from the employee's personnel file. Student vaccination information is maintained at the school.

Oregon has a state law that prohibits mandatory vaccinations, but no other state in our footprint has such a prohibition. While Montana's non-discrimination law recognizes vaccination status as a protected class, licensed nursing homes, long-term care facilities, and assisted living facilities (including our Montana-based Good Samaritan facilities) are exempt from Montana's law and are therefore allowed to mandate vaccines.

Are visitors allowed to enter our buildings if they aren't vaccinated?

Yes. This mandate is only for Sanford Health and Good Samaritan Society employees.

Will I need a booster shot of the COVID-19 vaccine and will that be required?

At this time, we do not yet know if a booster shot will be required for any of the COVID-19 vaccines. However, Sanford's COVID-19 Immunization policy makes clear that all Sanford employees will be expected to comply with all other recommendations of the CDC and FDA, including COVID-19 booster shots or annual vaccination.

POLICY QUESTIONS

Am I required to get the vaccine if I don't work directly with patients or residents?

Yes, all employees and students must get vaccinated. Getting the vaccine is the right thing to do to protect our patients/residents, our fellow coworkers, and our communities.

Are employees or students who are under the age of 18 required to get the vaccine? Is parental consent required?

Yes, absent medical or religious exemption, all employees and students are required to get the vaccine, regardless of age. Currently, those under age 18 can only receive the Pfizer vaccine. Parental consent will be needed for employees and students under age 18, and those under age 19 who are located in Nebraska.

Do I have to be fully vaccinated by Nov 1 or can I receive just the first dose?

You are required to receive an approved one-dose COVID-19 vaccination (e.g., J&J), or receive both doses of an approved two-dose vaccine (e.g., Pfizer, Moderna), by or before November 1, 2021.

Will new hires and students need to be fully vaccinated by Sept 1 or can they start if they have only received the first dose?

Employees hired on or after September 1, 2021 and students starting clinical rotations after September 1, 2021 will need one dose of an approved COVID-19 vaccination prior to commencement of employment/clinical rotations, and a second dose (if applicable) of an approved COVID-19 vaccination within 90 days of the start of employment.

If I choose not to be vaccinated as a student, what will happen?

Any volunteer, student, medical resident, contingent worker, locum or vendor who fails to comply with the COVID-19 vaccination requirements by or before November 1st, 2021 shall be removed from the schedule until such time when such person either receives the COVID-19 vaccination or complies with the masking requirements, if such person is exempt from vaccination.

Each academic institution should utilize their current process for students who desire vaccine exemption due to sincerely held religious beliefs or medical contraindications. Academic institutions are not required to submit exemption forms to Sanford Health, similar to how the annual influenza vaccination process is managed.

EXEMPTION QUESTIONS

If an employee or student has already tested positive to the antibodies, are they required to be vaccinated?

Yes. All employees and students are required to comply with the COVID-19 vaccination requirement on or before Nov. 1, 2021.

The medical evidence shows that people who got COVID-19 and got the vaccine are better protected than people who just got the COVID virus alone. Regardless of if you have had COVID-19, you are required to get vaccinated to have the best protection as possible.

COMMON CONCERNS

Will the COVID vaccine cause infertility?

No. There is no evidence that the COVID vaccine will result in sterilization. Watch Dr. Cauwels' [video debunking this myth](#).

Can pregnant or breastfeeding women get the vaccine?

Experts such as the Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine strongly recommend that pregnant women have access to the COVID-19 vaccines. The CDC is inviting women who received vaccination in the periconception period or during pregnancy to participate in the v-safe [COVID-19 Vaccine Pregnancy Registry](#). Thousands of pregnant women have been vaccinated with no known adverse outcomes at this time. Watch [Dr. Jeremy Cauwels' video](#). Please discuss any concerns with your health care provider.

What is the government doing to track the safety of the vaccine?

We are using the safety monitoring programs which have been used for years, including VAERS (Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System). Specific for COVID-19 vaccines, the CDC has developed V-safe; a mobile option to report a potential reaction. It is important to note that just because an incident is reported to VAERS does not mean that the vaccine caused the event. Rather, VAERS is an early warning safety monitoring program that allows experts to investigate each event to make sure the vaccine continues to be safe.

Visit [SanfordHealth.org](#) for additional COVID-19 vaccine questions.