

August 25, 2021

MESSAGE TO ALL EMPLOYEES

Anticipated Questions and Answers about the District's New Vaccination Policy

Is it true that that the District is mandating vaccinations now?

Yes, following the news that the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) had approved the Pfizer vaccine, District administration made a recommendation to the Board of Education of the City of St. Louis for a new policy mandating vaccination. The recommendation was unanimously approved on August 24, 2021 at the BOE meeting.

When does the new policy go into effect, and when do I have to get my first shot?

The District's vaccine policy goes into effect immediately. All employees will have until October 15, 2021, to provide proof of **full vaccination** or receive approval for an applicable exemption.

"Full vaccination" means two weeks after your final shot. Employees who opt to take the Pfizer vaccine would need to get their first shot **no later than September 10** to meet the October 15th deadline. The second dose would then be administered three weeks later, with full vaccination achieved two more weeks later, on October 15.

How many SLPS employees have already been vaccinated?

Approximately 86 percent of the 2,600 (of approximately 3,600 employees) respondents to our recent survey indicate they have been vaccinated.

However, percentages of vaccinated people vary across the District and from school to school. Some schools have as high as 90% staff vaccination, while other schools have as low as 50%.

If we already have high levels of compliance, why are we mandating the vaccination?

According to information and advice from our healthcare partners, mandating a COVID-19 vaccine is our best way to protect our students, staff, and families. This includes the City of St. Louis' Acting Director of Health Dr. Fredrick Echols, who states: "COVID-19 vaccination mandates and other policies have been deemed acceptable and a best practice to protect the health of staff and the community."

Additionally, minimizing/eliminating quarantines is the only way SLPS can continue successful and continuous in-person learning. Quarantined staff members last year represented the greatest obstacle to in-person learning. Since vaccinated staff members do not have to quarantine following a close contact, it is a great benefit to our students in ensuring continuous classroom instruction, school support services, and more. Moreover, please remember that, under Policy 4623, unvaccinated staff members who have had a close contact at school are using their own time to quarantine.

What do I do if I am concerned that with my medical history I should not have a vaccine?

Please share your concern and discuss your vaccine options with your physician. If you believe that you are eligible for a medical exemption, please email ERStaff@slps.org to request a copy of the District's exemption form for your doctor to complete. **Requests for exemptions must be on the District's form; doctors' notes will not be accepted.** Please be sure to submit your completed exemption form on or before **September 24, 2021** in order to be considered for an exemption.

Employees who are given approved exemptions will be subject to testing on Monday and Thursday each week, at no cost to the employee.

My religion will not allow me to take vaccines. What should I do?

If you believe that you are eligible for a religious exemption, please email ERStaff@slps.org to request a copy of the District's exemption form. **Requests for exemptions must be on the District's form.** Please be sure to submit your completed exemption form on or before **September 24, 2021** in order to be considered for an exemption. Relevant information on the COVID-19 vaccine for people with allergies can be found here:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/recommendations/specific-groups/allergies.html>

Employees who are given approved exemptions will be subject to testing on Monday and Thursday each week, at no cost to the employee.

So, are you saying that I have to take the Pfizer vaccine?

It does not matter which vaccine you decide to take. The requirement is that by October 15, 2021, all employees provide proof of **full** COVID-19 vaccination.

You may select any of the available COVID-19 vaccines. Please take note that the two-shot Moderna vaccine requires **28 days between doses, such that you would need your first shot by September 3** in order to comply with the deadline for full vaccination by October 15. If you opt to take the one-shot Johnson & Johnson vaccine, you would need to receive that shot by October 1 and achieve full vaccination and in compliance with the policy deadline.

Is Local 420 supportive of the mandate?

Yes, national and local union leaders strongly support a vaccination mandate.

Do I have to pay to get the vaccine?

No, the vaccine will not cost you anything. The District will provide the vaccination to you free of charge. Partnering with the Urban League Of Greater Metropolitan St. Louis, SLPS will offer vaccinations very soon. We will keep you informed as soon as schedules are set. Again, we intend to make this as easy as possible for all SLPS employees.

Where can I get the Pfizer vaccine?

You can check for the Pfizer vaccine at local pharmacies. However, the District is presently working with the Urban League to ensure Pfizer vaccination opportunities for all employees. Please watch for additional information regarding vaccination events that will take place within the next two weeks.

Are we mandating vaccinations for students as well?

No, the current policy is only for adults. It applies to all SLPS employees, as well as contractors, vendors and volunteers who might come in contact with our students.

However, vaccination is highly encouraged for children 12 and over. The District will continue to make opportunities available to all eligible age groups.

What happens if I decide not to get the vaccine?

If you do not have proof of full vaccination by Friday, October 15, 2021, you will be placed on unpaid leave and/or subject to discipline, up to and including termination.

Also, please remember that misrepresentation of your vaccination status is considered a violation of Board Policy 4840, and is a terminable offense.

Can I opt out of vaccination and test weekly instead?

No. Vaccination is mandatory for all employees without an approved exemption.

Thanks to every one of our employees on every level, we are enjoying a wonderful start to our return to in-person learning! Early attendance numbers are even better than we could've hoped given the present pandemic situation. We estimate that more than 15,000 of our 20,000 students attended in the first two days of school.

This is encouraging because we all know the perils of not having children in safe and stable learning environments. We must do everything we can to create a healthy environment for them and to encourage them to stay in school. Thank you to all for your efforts in this goal.