

Frequently Asked Questions: COVID-19 VACCINATION POLICY UPDATE



WHAT IS BEING ANNOUNCED?

Based on the latest scientific data and research, recommendations by the CDC and guidance from our own team of experts, we have updated our COVID-19 vaccine requirements to allow employees in both patient-facing and non-patient facing roles to apply for and receive an approved medical or strongly held belief exemption. Previously, we were only allowing such exemptions for non-patient facing employees.

Why is this change being made now?

Over the past few months, we have been encouraged by a continued decline in the severity of COVID-19-related symptoms, hospitalizations and death, and we are hopeful that future variants will have even less impact on our daily lives. Our decision reflects the level of risk associated with current variants and our confidence in our ability to ease precautions while continuing to provide the highest quality of care and safest environment possible to everyone we serve. This decision was made based on the latest scientific data and research, recommendations by the CDC and guidance from our own team of experts.

Does this mean that COVID-19 vaccines are no longer required for employees?

No. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) continues to require health care workers to receive the COVID-19 vaccine or an approved medical or strongly held belief exemption. We will continue to comply with this requirement.

Why did Riverside initially not allow employees in patient-facing roles to get a strongly held belief exemption?

Given the high number of hospitalizations and deaths that were associated with early COVID-19 variants, we continue to believe that requiring our employees, especially those in patient-facing roles, to receive the COVID-19 vaccine allowed us to provide the highest quality of care and safest environment possible at a critical time in the pandemic.

What safety protocols will unvaccinated employees be required to follow?

Employees who receive an approved medical or strongly held belief exemption will be required to follow all state and federal regulations, including wearing a surgical mask while on Riverside Healthcare grounds. For testing protocols, please see the Riverside policy as requirements may change based on transmission rates.

Will employees who left because of the vaccine requirement be eligible for rehire?

Yes. We understood that this was a difficult decision for some of our employees, even those who chose to comply. We left the door open for our former colleagues to return if they met job qualifications and complied with our current policies. Any qualified applicant who complies with our policies, including our updated COVID-19 vaccine requirement is eligible for employment at Riverside.

Does leadership have any concerns about rehiring employees who made the decision to leave Riverside in response to its COVID-19 vaccine requirement?

No. This was a painful time for both those who made the decision to leave and those who continued working at Riverside. As the transition was made, we maintained a respectful and collegial environment, and we are confident we will continue to do so as we welcome back former colleagues who qualify for an open position and comply with our current policies.

Was this decision made to resolve litigation Riverside is facing regarding the COVID-19 vaccine mandate?

No. While we cannot discuss matters related to ongoing litigation, we can say that this decision was made based solely on the latest scientific data and research, recommendations by the CDC and guidance from our own team of experts.

Does Riverside Healthcare plan to contact former employees who left due to vaccine requirement to notify them of this change?

No. However, we look forward to welcoming any qualified applicant who will comply with our current policies, including our requirement to be vaccinated for COVID-19 or receive an approved medical or strongly held belief exemption.

Will Riverside revise its vaccine policy again in the future?

Riverside Healthcare will continue to monitor COVID-19 cases and trends. If a future COVID-19 variant appears to result in more serious illness or a higher number of hospitalizations and deaths, we may need to revise our COVID-19 vaccine policy accordingly.