

Milwaukee County Exec. Crowley, Board of Supervisors: Announce vaccine mandate

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MILWAUKEE — Today, Milwaukee County Executive David Crowley and the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors announced a COVID-19 vaccine mandate for Milwaukee County employees. The mandate was announced via administrative order and will be considered by the County Board later this month.

“Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, County leaders have made decisions and crafted policies that deliver against our vision to become the healthiest County in Wisconsin, protecting the health of our employees, those we serve and the broader Milwaukee County community,” said Milwaukee County Executive David Crowley.

“A requirement for all employees to be vaccinated, aside from those with reasonable and approved exemptions, is consistent with our vision and our responsibilities as public servants.”

Vaccination Requirements

As outlined in the administrative order, current employees must submit required documentation verifying their complete vaccination status or must submit a completed medical or religious exemption request form no later than October 1, 2021. This policy does not immediately apply to County employees who are represented by public safety unions. Additionally, effective October 1, 2021, vaccination status (or an approved accommodation) will be a condition of

employment for any current and future posted positions, excluding MCSO postings. All contractors working in County high-risk or congregate living facilities will be required to complete their vaccination by no later than October 11, 2021. Additional contractor requirements will be determined by individual departments based on the risk profile of service users, staffing levels, the necessity of the service being open for in-person use, and other operational needs when considering broader requirements.

“The COVID-19 vaccines — including the now fully FDA-approved Pfizer vaccine — are safe, effective and widely available,” said County Board Chairwoman Marcelia Nicholson. “Increasing vaccination rates protects our most vulnerable state residents, helps stop the spread of COVID-19, lessens the severity of illness and the risk of hospitalization and death, and protects all those we serve in Milwaukee County.”

Consistent with federal and state law, Milwaukee County will consider requests for accommodation due to specific medical conditions or because of sincerely held religious beliefs on a case-by-case basis and may engage with the employee, medical providers, and/or faith community leaders as allowed by law in considering requests.

Consequences for Noncompliance and Risk Mitigation

Starting October 11, 2021 employees who are noncompliant with the vaccine mandate will be ineligible for voluntary overtime or Risk Recognition Pay, when it is available. Additional department-level consequences might include:

- Unpaid suspension for up to 10 days;
- Consideration of non-compliance as a factor when making decisions about

promotions, hiring current employees into new positions at the County, or temporary assignments to a higher classification; and/or

- Consideration of non-compliance as a factor in departmental other salary adjustment allocations.

Starting January 1, 2022, employees who are noncompliant and are enrolled in the County's healthcare plan will incur a \$20 per pay period surcharge. Additionally, employees working in the Behavioral Health Division (BHD) may be restricted from work until vaccination requirements are completed.

Ultimately, an employee's non-compliance may lead to separation.

Recognizing and Rewarding Vaccinated Employees

"Vaccines are an effective way to save lives and to minimize the impact of COVID-19 on individuals and families across Milwaukee County," said Supervisor Ryan Clancy. A combination of incentives for vaccination as well as a mandate is our best way to keep our community – including our employees and vulnerable populations that we serve – as protected as possible."

Through the County's Vaccin8 program, employees with a completed vaccination are eligible for up to eight additional hours of paid time off through December 31, 2021. Additionally, employees with a completed vaccination will receive \$50 via payroll through December 31, 2021.

"While there should and will be reasonable consequences for employees who choose not to comply with this policy, there will also be significant rewards to the

employees who have made the choice to protect themselves, their colleagues, and their communities through vaccination,” said Supervisor Shawn Rolland. “A COVID vaccine requirement can help keep our county facilities open, keep our businesses open, keep our hospitals open, and so much more.”

Research has shown that relationships matter, and trustworthy ambassadors can be a driving force in encouraging vaccinations. With this in mind, the County is also rewarding employees who champion vaccinations and successfully encourage a colleague to complete their vaccination between September 5 and December 31, 2021. These “Vax Champions” will receive a \$25 bonus payment.

“With three highly safe, highly effective vaccines available, the full approval of the Pfizer vaccine, and the Delta variant surging in our community, now is the time to strengthen vaccine policies and expectations,” said Crowley. “Milwaukee County employees can and should be leaders in protecting each other, those we serve, and our entire community.”