

Milwaukee County Exec Crowley: Announces COVID-19 booster mandate for high-risk facilities

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Milwaukee County COVID-19 vaccine booster mandate for employees, contractors and volunteers at high-risk facilities will protect employees, those served by the County

MILWAUKEE — This week, Milwaukee County updated its vaccine mandate to require booster vaccines for eligible employees, contractors and volunteers at high-risk facilities, including the Milwaukee County Jail, the House of Correction (HOC), Youth Detention Center and Behavioral Health hospital service.

“Milwaukee County has achieved a high level of vaccination throughout its workforce, particularly in high-risk facilities. As leaders in the effort to achieve race and health equity, we take seriously the health of our employees and our responsibility to help stop the community spread of the disease. However, as studies show, the initial vaccine’s protection against COVID-19 decreases over time,” said County Executive David Crowley. “Fortunately, a booster shot improves protection against COVID-19, including the Delta and Omicron variants.”

To be compliant with the updated mandate, employees, contractors and volunteers at high-risk facilities who are eligible for a booster shot (it has been five months since their second dose of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine or two months since their single dose of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine) must receive their booster dose by February 4, 2022, or 21 days after becoming eligible.

Mandating booster vaccine doses in high-risk facilities is not only about protecting the health and safety of employees, contractors, volunteers and those the County serves, it will also provide enhanced flexibility in managing the effects of COVID-19

on the County workforce.

“Milwaukee County is not unique in that it has felt the impact of COVID-19 on our workforce,” said County Executive Crowley. “A COVID-19 booster means employees who provide critical, essential services are less likely to contract COVID-19 and if infected are less likely to have severe illness.”

Employees who are noncompliant with the updated vaccine mandate will be ineligible for voluntary overtime or Risk Recognition Pay and / or Premium Pay Differential, 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.

Mandated boosters do not apply to employees who have received an exemption from the COVID-19 vaccine mandate.

Recognizing and Rewarding Boosted Employees

To encourage booster vaccination across the entire County workforce, the County has also launched Boost MKE Co., a recognition program for all County employees who receive their boosters. Between January 14, 2022 and March 11, 2022, all employees who have submitted proof of their booster vaccine will be entered into weekly incentive prize drawings. Each week, at least two employees will be selected to receive a \$250 award.

“We are still in the thick of this pandemic,” said County Executive Crowley. “If you were vaccinated against COVID-19, you have made the decision to protect yourself, your loved ones and your community and it will save lives. But there is still more we can all do: get a booster.”