

# COVID-19 Vaccination Requirement FAQ for Child Care, Early Learning, and Youth Development Providers

On August 18, 2021 Governor Jay Inslee [announced](#) that most child care, early learning, and youth development providers **must be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 by October 18, 2021 or obtain a religious or medical accommodation.**

The Governor also announced that employees in higher education institutions, K-12 educators, school staff, early learning coaches, bus drivers, school volunteers, and others working in school facilities will have until October 18, 2021 to be fully vaccinated as a condition of employment. This includes public, private, and charter schools.

Please review the [Vaccine Mandate Frequently Asked Questions](#) page on the Governor's site. Additional information is available from the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction in their [Frequently Asked Questions for K-12 School Employees](#).

The Washington State Department of Health (DOH) will update this FAQ document in coordination with the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) as state guidance is updated and more information becomes available.

## Summary of June 22, 2022 Update:

- Updated information regarding age of eligibility for COVID-19 vaccines.
- Removal of outdated references to timeline for compliance with the vaccination order.

## Frequently Asked Questions

[Who is required to comply with the vaccine mandate?](#)

**Q: Which child care, early learning, and youth development providers does this vaccine order apply to?**

**A:** Currently, this requirement for COVID-19 vaccination applies to:

- Licensed and certified child care centers' and family homes' employees, including any substitute staff.
- Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP), Early ECEAP, Head Start, and center-based Early Head Start programs.
- License-exempt early learning programs, and license-exempt child care provided outside the child's home.
- Youth development programs providing child care and other basic supports to school-age children and youth, including supports to assist in accessing K-12 instruction.

- Contractors, including early learning and child care coaches, consultants, volunteers, trainers, etc.

**Q: Which child care and early learning providers are not required to follow the vaccine order?**

**A:** Currently, this requirement for COVID-19 vaccination does not apply to:

- Family, Friend, and Neighbor (FFN) providers, including those who accept child care subsidy.
- Household members of licensed family home providers.
- License-exempt child care that is provided in the child’s own home (for example baby sitting, nanny services, au pairs).
- Tribal programs, including those licensed or certified by DCYF, or federally licensed programs.
- License-exempt programs offered on-site at religious organizations (for example on-site child care that many religious organizations offer as part of their religious services, such as nurseries and Sunday school).
- Providers of youth enrichment activities such as youth sports; overnight camps; Scouts, Camp Fire, etc.; driving instruction; youth fitness classes (e.g., yoga, martial arts, performing arts, guided workouts, etc.); guided outdoor recreation and lessons such as skiing, golf, and swimming; and similar activities that do not typically serve a child care function.
  - At this time, [proclamation 21-14.1](#) is not intended to impact the services and activities offered by local parks and recreation departments and other youth-serving community-based organizations except when those entities are providing child care, including licensed and unlicensed care, and other in-person basic supports for children and youth.

**Q: Can child care, early learning, and youth development providers opt out of this requirement?**

**A:** No. Requirements issued via executive action by the Governor hold the power of law, and providers must follow the law. Required personnel must either be fully vaccinated or meet the requirements to be exempt under a medical or religious exemption.

**Q: Will the children attending child care, early learning, and youth development programs be required to get the vaccine?**

**A:** No. At this time, children who are eligible to receive the vaccine are not required to be vaccinated. As independent business owners, employers can make their own policies related to children age-eligible to receive the vaccine in their care. The State Board of Health has a formal process for setting immunization requirements for children in Washington state.

While not required, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Washington State DOH strongly recommend that all eligible individuals get vaccinated as soon as possible to protect themselves and their communities.

[How do I comply with the vaccine order?](#)

**Q: What does it mean to be fully vaccinated per the vaccine order?**

**A:** For the purposes of this order, being fully vaccinated means that a person is at least two weeks past their final dose of an authorized COVID-19 vaccine primary series.

While not required to comply with the vaccine order, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Washington State DOH strongly recommend that all eligible individuals stay up to date with their COVID-19 vaccination by receiving all recommended doses in the primary series and all recommended boosters and additional doses when eligible based on age and health status.

**Q: Where can I go to get vaccinated?**

**A:** Locations offering vaccinations throughout the state can be found by going to the DOH [Vaccine Locator webpage](#).

**Q: Is the vaccine safe?**

**A:** Yes. COVID-19 vaccines were evaluated in tens of thousands of participants in clinical trials and millions of people in the U.S. have received COVID-19 vaccines under the most intense safety monitoring in U.S. history. [More information about the safety of the COVID-19 vaccines](#) is available from the CDC. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has authorized the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine for individuals ages 6 months to 15 years old, and fully approved for individuals 16 years and older. The FDA has also authorized the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine for individuals ages 6 months to 17 years old, and fully approved for individuals aged 18 and over.

**Q: If I have already been infected with COVID-19 and have natural immunity, do I need to be vaccinated?**

**A:** Yes. The proclamation does not provide an exemption for individuals who have previously been infected with COVID-19. Experts do not yet know how long you are protected from getting sick again after recovering from COVID-19 and recommend getting vaccinated regardless of whether you already had COVID-19. People are able to get sick with COVID-19 again after they've already had it. Studies have shown that vaccination provides a strong boost in protection in people who have recovered from COVID-19.

**Q: Does the Governor's vaccine requirement include booster shots?**

**A:** The proclamation does not take boosters or third doses into consideration at this time.

**Q: Does the Governor's requirement allow for exemptions, such as for medical or religious reasons?**

**A:** The Governor's order allows child care, early learning, and youth development providers to obtain a medical or religious exemption. Please see information below in [How do I request a medical or religious exemption?](#)

[How and where do I submit proof of complying with the vaccine order?](#)

**Q: How do I submit verification of meeting the vaccine mandate to my employer?**

**A:** Employees should follow the process identified by their employer for providing proof of vaccination. Acceptable proof includes one of the following:

- CDC COVID-19 Vaccination Record Card or photo of the card
- Documentation of vaccination from a health care provider or electronic health record
- State Immunization Information System record
- WA State Certificate of COVID-19 Vaccination from [MyLRmobile.com](https://mylrmobile.com)
- WA Verify [Digital COVID-19 Vaccine Record](#)

Personal attestation is not an acceptable form of verification.

Read the [Visual Guide to Official Washington State Proof of COVID-19 Vaccination](#) to see what each kind of documentation looks like.

**Q: How do I request a medical or religious exemption?**

**A:** Employees should request a medical or religious exemption by following their employer's standard medical or religious exemption process. Resources or templates for medical and religious exemption forms that child care, early learning, and youth development employers may use are available on the Governor's [Vaccine Mandate Frequently Asked Questions](#) page. An employee granted an exemption would then engage in an individualized review to determine if an accommodation is possible and meet the business needs of the employer without causing undue hardship.

**Q: Should the child care, early learning or youth development provider retain copies of employees' proof of vaccination or of meeting the vaccine requirement through a religious or medical accommodation?**

**A:** Licensed or certified child care providers and ECEAP contractors must maintain a copy of proof of vaccine verification completion in the staff file on-site. License-exempt early learning, child care, and youth development providers will need to decide if it is advisable to retain a copy of an employee's vaccination records based on its business needs. Employers should consider the legal risks associated with retaining such records, as opposed to simply documenting that an employee has shown proof to an appropriate individual.

**Q: Can child care, early learning, and youth development staff prove their vaccination status through an attestation?**

**A:** No. Employees must provide proof by showing one of the documents listed in the [Visual Guide to Official Washington State Proof of COVID-19 Vaccination](#).

**Q: I am licensed or certified by DCYF or am an ECEAP contractor. Do I also need to provide proof of meeting the vaccine requirement to DCYF?**

**A:** Licensed or certified child care and ECEAP workers will complete a simple acknowledgement in the workforce registry, MERIT, that they have completed one of the options possible for meeting the vaccine mandate. This functionality will become available in MERIT soon.

DCYF will monitor provider compliance with the COVID-19 vaccine mandate at the licensed child care center, family home, and ECEAP contractor level. For licensed child care, compliance with COVID-19 Vaccine mandate, which includes approved exemptions, will be reviewed at the time of the next monitoring visit. Additional information about ECEAP monitoring timelines will be provided in the near future.

**Q: How can I meet the vaccine requirement if I work for a school district in an ECEAP/Early ECEAP or Head Start/Early Head Start program? What does the district need to know, and what does DCYF need to know?**

**A:** The school district will assume the responsibility of verifying documents for their employees that are also providing ECEAP/Early ECEAP or Head Start/Early Head Start services. School district ECEAP/Early ECEAP or Head Start/Early Head Start staff will also need to document in DCYF's MERIT system that they have met the vaccine requirement as verified by their school district employer.

**Q: How can I meet the vaccine requirement if I work for a public or private university or college in an ECEAP/Early ECEAP or Head Start Early Head Start Program? What does the university or college need to know, and what does DCYF need to know?**

**A:** The university or college will assume the responsibility of verifying documents for their employees that are providing ECEAP/Early ECEAP or Head Start/Early Head Start services. Staff working in ECEAP/Early ECEAP or Head Start/Early Head Start programs will also need to document in DCYF's MERIT system that they have met the vaccine requirement as verified by their university or college employer.

**Q: Is frequent testing an alternative to vaccination for a provider covered under this order?**

**A:** No. If an individual does not qualify for an accommodation, they must get vaccinated. Testing is not an allowed alternative. If an individual qualifies for an accommodation, they are exempt from the requirement to get vaccinated. Testing may be an option for a provider to consider for individuals entitled to accommodations.

**Q: What if someone refuses to get vaccinated?**

**A:** All providers must be fully vaccinated as of October 18, 2021, as a qualification of fitness for continued employment unless they have been granted an accommodation for religious or medical reasons. Employers will need to follow their personnel policies or seek legal advice around dismissal if the staff person is no longer fit for continued employment.

Employers should consider continued or additional safety requirements for providers who are granted accommodations.

**Additional Resources**

- [Vaccine Mandate Frequently Asked Questions | Governor Jay Inslee \(wa.gov\)](#)
- [COVID-19 Vaccine Requirement for School Employees: Frequently Asked Questions \(www.k12.wa.us\)](http://www.k12.wa.us)
- [Center for Parent Information & Resources](#)

- [Child Care Law Center](#)

## More COVID-19 Information and Resources

Stay up-to-date on the [current COVID-19 situation in Washington](#), [Governor Inslee's proclamations](#), [symptoms](#), [how it spreads](#), and [how and when people should get tested](#). See our [Frequently Asked Questions](#) for more information.

A person's race/ethnicity or nationality does not, itself, put them at greater risk of COVID-19. However, data are revealing that communities of color are being disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. This is due to the effects of racism, and in particular, structural racism, that leaves some groups with fewer opportunities to protect themselves and their communities. [Stigma will not help to fight the illness](#). Share only accurate information to keep rumors and misinformation from spreading.

- [WA State Department of Health 2019 Novel Coronavirus Outbreak \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [WA State Coronavirus Response \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [Find Your Local Health Department or District](#)
- [CDC Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)

**Have more questions?** Call our COVID-19 Information hotline: **1-800-525-0127**

Monday – 6 a.m. to 10 p.m., Tuesday – Sunday and [observed state holidays](#), 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. For interpretative services, **press #** when they answer and **say your language**. For questions about your own health, COVID-19 testing, or testing results, please contact a health care provider.

To request this document in another format, call 1-800-525-0127. Deaf or hard of hearing customers, please call 711 ([Washington Relay](#)) or email [civil.rights@doh.wa.gov](mailto:civil.rights@doh.wa.gov).