



Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Aspire's Vaccination Mandate

August 24, 2021

1. Q: When do I need to be fully vaccinated?

A: You must be fully vaccinated by December 15th.

2. Q: What does it mean to be fully vaccinated?

A: Fully vaccinated means you have received two doses of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine or one dose of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

3. Q: What happens if I'm not fully vaccinated by December 15th?

A: Your employment with Aspire will end on December 15th if you have not provided documentation of your full vaccination. All employees will need to be fully vaccinated in order to continue their employment.

4. Q: Are there any exceptions to the mandate?

A: The law allows for documented religious and medical exemptions. If you feel you qualify for an exemption, contact the People Team right away to start the review process. This process must be completed by December 15 to continue working for Aspire. Getting appropriate documentation may take some time, so we highly recommend that you start the process sooner rather than later.

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All other employees, including those who work remotely, must be fully vaccinated by December 15th.

5. Q: Why isn't testing an option or an alternative to mandating the vaccine?

A: We believe this pandemic is a global public health crisis and the best way to address that crisis is through vaccination. Testing alone does not offer protection from COVID-19. Aspire's work requires us to prioritize the safety and wellbeing of those we support, who are twice as likely to die from COVID-19 than people without disabilities. Vaccination of Aspire's workforce is an essential component to fighting the pandemic and achieving our mission.

Weekly testing will be necessary for people who receive a religious or medical exemption from vaccinating.

6. Q: Will Aspire require Shared Living providers to be vaccinated?

A: Shared Living providers are not employees of Aspire. So, the mandate will not apply to them. However, Aspire urges every provider and member of their households over the age of 12 to get vaccinated if they have not already done so. There is a high risk of spreading COVID-19 to everyone in your home if you become infected. Individuals living with providers may decide to leave the placement if the provider or members of their household are not vaccinated.

7. Q: Will the people we support be mandated to vaccinate?

A: We don't have the authority to mandate that the people we serve vaccinate.

8. Q: We currently allow parent/guardian to visit program sites with specific guidelines. Will we require visitors to be vaccinated?

A: Currently families are allowed to visit programs but must do self-screening, mask when in doors, and follow universal precautions. This will continue as long as it is deemed safe, regardless of vaccination status of parent/guardian. We don't have the authority to mandate parents/guardians vaccinate.

9. Q: Do new hires know they will need to be vaccinated?

A: Starting September 15th, all new hires must be vaccinated. We are already communicating with new hires about the vaccine mandate.

10. Q: Is vaccination going to be listed as a requirement in our job postings moving forward?

A: yes

11. Q: Shouldn't it be my choice to get vaccinated or not?

A: We believe that vaccination is your choice—definitely. We fully appreciate that every person must make the choice to vaccinate or not based on their own understanding of the risks and benefits of vaccination. You have the right to make that decision for yourself, including decisions about your employment. For organizational health and the health of the Aspire community, we have decided that to work at Aspire you must be vaccinated.

12. Q: It doesn't feel good that you are threatening my job if I don't get vaccinated.

A: These are important decisions that we do not take lightly, and we know you feel the same. We hope that every single employee at Aspire will choose to stay and continue to do outstanding work. And we understand how significant this decision is. That's one reason we are providing both individual and community-wide opportunities to talk



about this issue, as well as resources to help everyone at Aspire make the right decision for themselves, their families and their communities.

13. Q: What if I'm concerned about the effect of the vaccine on my health?

A: There is a lot of information available about possible reactions to the vaccine. If you are concerned about how you might react, please contact your health care provider.

14. Q: Is there a plan in place to address the loss of staff due to the mandate?

A: Yes. The Executive and Senior Operations teams are developing a detailed workforce stabilization plan. We recognize that we are in the midst of a prolonged workforce shortage that has significantly strained everyone's resources, personally and professionally. We have already begun the process of change needed to increase retention of employees, which is the long-term solution to stabilizing the workforce independent of the mandate. These measures include more effective onboarding, the deployment of DSP mentors throughout Aspire's programs, training for frontline managers, and additional resources to support managers and veteran employees.

Leaders at the program level manage scheduling each and every day. Maintaining safe ratios in each program is and will continue to be a central focus for us. Managing vacancies, schedules and service to individuals is a critical part of the operation of the agency. Whether those vacancies are created by the vaccine mandate, the pandemic itself or a myriad of other factors, it is a part of what we do on an on-going basis.

Over the years we have demonstrated that no matter what obstacles we have faced, we have been able to hire staff to support individuals we serve. These last 18 months have presented us with a new type of challenge, but through it all we have continued hiring new staff. Retention of those we hire must be a top priority for all of us. Having said that, we realize vacancies still remain a serious challenge.

To address the staffing issues, we have and are, implementing several new initiatives including a dedicated recruitment team for all agency hiring, streamlined interview processes, using new sources for reaching candidates, regular contacts to over 2,000 potential employees via text messaging and identifying and hiring **in anticipation of vacancies**. We will continue these efforts and more as we move forward.

Additionally, we will be using new funding made available to us through recent federal legislation to add recruiting resources, new wage & bonus incentives, and additional frontline employees hired ahead of the need. We are collecting data continuously to ensure that our recruiting and retention numbers are improving as expected, and to predict how many employees will choose to leave as a result of the mandate. We will ensure that Aspire is fully prepared to proactively address any increase in departures. Uninterrupted services—both for our employees and for the people we support—is our number one priority.



15. Q: When an employee leaves because they choose not to vaccinate, will they be eligible for unemployment?

A: We don't know. Unemployment claims are made to the Department of Labor in each state, which reviews and determines eligibility. If you have questions, we recommend you contact your local unemployment office.

16. Q: Is there a plan to communicate with parents/guardians if staffing changes occur due to the mandate?

A: We will communicate any changes to service delivery to the individuals receiving services, parents/guardians, and employees who will be affected as appropriate.

17. Q: Can I get vaccinated at work?

A: Mobile units operated by the DPH will be on-site beginning in September in many of our locations. Mobile units require a minimum of 5 employees to be vaccinated per stop. If we have larger groups of employees available for on-site vaccination clinics, those will be scheduled as well. Lists of vaccination sites are readily available throughout the areas in which we work and live. Lists of sites in your area will be emailed and posted on the employee portal. **Please reach out to the people team if you need help finding a vaccination site near you.**

18. Q: Will I be required to get booster shots when they are available?

A: We don't know yet. This is a developing situation. As we have done throughout the pandemic, we will continue to review the public health recommendations and evaluate the situation in the states where we operate. Any changes in recommendations regarding vaccines will be communicated to all employees.

19. Q: Will Aspire do onsite clinics for the booster for those of us that were vaccinated early on?

A: We are looking into this. The Federal Pharmacy Program will likely offer onsite clinics and we will be sure to take advantage of these clinics if/when they are made available to us. Booster shots should also be available after September 20 at any public vaccination site for people who received their second Pfizer dose 8 months prior.

20. Q: Will we be able to unmask once everyone is vaccinated?

A: Our number one goal right now is the health and safety of the Aspire community. As we have done throughout the pandemic, we will continue to review the public health recommendations and evaluate the situation in the states where we operate. Any changes in recommendations regarding masking and other measures will be communicated to all employees.



21. Q: Are we going to stop community outings with the people we support due to the uptick in COVID cases?

A: Currently, community outings are happening with precautions in place—masking, distancing when possible, etc. We are monitoring community spread of the virus and will continue to adjust as necessary in order to keep employees and the people we support safe and healthy.

22. Q: Is the vaccine lottery still happening?

A: Yes, we will be drawing three winners on September 1st and another three winners on October 1st.

