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Contra Costa, Santa Clara, and San Francisco County Public Health Officials Urge Employers to Consider Requiring Employee Vaccination to Promote COVID-Safe Workplaces

With COVID-19 cases rapidly on the rise, leaving unvaccinated individuals at risk for serious illness and death, the health officers of Contra Costa, Santa Clara, and San Francisco counties strongly urge all employers to consider implementing workplace COVID-19 safety policies that require their workforce to get fully vaccinated as soon as possible.

For any employees who are not yet fully vaccinated, employers must require and enforce masking under current state law. In addition, employers are encouraged to require frequent COVID-19 testing of unvaccinated employees.

“A universal vaccination policy may benefit businesses because the quarantine requirements are different for vaccinated and unvaccinated workers,” said Dr. Susan Philip, San Francisco’s health officer. “Currently, an employee who is not vaccinated must quarantine for at least 10 days if exposed to someone who tested positive, whereas fully vaccinated workers do not need to quarantine unless they have symptoms.”

The relaxing of community and workplace transmission protections since mid-June in California and the rapid spread of the Delta variant of COVID-19, which is much more contagious than the original strains of the virus, have led to significantly higher case rates, and a higher risk of transmission at businesses and workplaces as a result.

“Workers who are unvaccinated against COVID-19 pose a substantial health and financial risk to the workplace,” said Dr. Chris Farnitano, Contra Costa County’s health officer. “Most importantly, workplace exposures have led to serious illnesses and deaths.”

Employers can play a critical role in ensuring a safe workplace environment and boosting vaccination rates among working-age individuals by requiring vaccination as a condition of employment, with very limited exceptions for medical exemptions or strongly held religious beliefs.

Local and national data show that fully vaccinated people are far less likely to catch COVID-19 or require hospitalization than people who are unvaccinated.



Requiring documentation of COVID-19 vaccination rather than self-attestation is recommended as a best practice for employers to ensure workers are adhering to the appropriate workplace protections.

Current state and federal employment law support employers requiring documentation of vaccination status, requiring vaccination as a condition of employment, and requiring additional safety precautions including masking and frequent testing for employees who are unvaccinated. Resources are available via the [California Department of Fair Employment and Housing](#).

“Eight months since the first COVID-19 vaccine was administered, COVID-19 vaccines have proven to be highly effective, and very safe, and are the most important tool we have for preventing COVID-19 illness, hospitalizations, and deaths,” said Dr. Sara Cody, Health Officer and Director of Public Health for the County of Santa Clara. “We encourage employers to take strong action to promote COVID-19 safe workplaces through vaccination and other workplace safety requirements.”

For information about finding a safe, free and convenient COVID-19 vaccine, visit sf.gov/getvaccinated.

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