

SOUTH DAKOTA STATE MEDICAL ASSOCIATION  
POLICY

Subject: COVID-19 Vaccination Mandates for Workers in Health & Long-Term Care

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POLICY STATEMENT

The South Dakota State Medical Association (SDSMA) believes that health care and long-term care employers in South Dakota that require their workers to receive the COVID-19 vaccine are in logical fulfillment of the ethical commitment for health care workers to ensure the health and safety of their patients and residents.

Because of highly contagious variants, including the Delta variant, and significant numbers of unvaccinated people, COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations and deaths are once again rising throughout the U.S.<sup>1</sup> Vaccination is the primary way to put the pandemic behind us and avoid the return of stringent public health measures.

Unfortunately, many health care and long-term care personnel remain unvaccinated. As we move towards full FDA approval of the currently available vaccines, all health care workers should get vaccinated for their own health, and to protect their colleagues, families, residents of long-term care facilities and patients. This is especially necessary to protect those who are vulnerable, including unvaccinated children and the immunocompromised. Indeed, this is why many health care and long-term care organizations already require vaccinations for influenza, hepatitis B, and pertussis.

We support all health care and long-term care employers in South Dakota who make the decision to require their employees to be vaccinated against COVID-19.

We stand with the growing number of experts and institutions that support the requirement for universal vaccination of health workers.<sup>2,3</sup> While we recognize some workers cannot be vaccinated because of identified medical reasons and should be exempted from a mandate, they constitute a small minority of all workers.

Existing COVID-19 vaccine mandates have proven safe and effective.<sup>4,5</sup> Simultaneously, we recognize the existence of mistrust of health care institutions, including among many in the health care workforce. We must continue to address workers' concerns, engage with underrepresented populations, and work with trusted messengers to improve vaccine acceptance.

We encourage employers across the state to implement effective policies encouraging vaccination. The health, safety, and economic stability of U.S. workers, families, communities,

and the nation depends on it.

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Covid Data Tracker Weekly Review. July 16, 2021. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/covid-data/covidview/index.html> [Accessed 22 July 2021].
2. Weber, D., Al-Tawfiq, J., Babcock, H., Bryant, K., Drees, M., Elshaboury, R., et al. (2021). Multisociety Statement on COVID-19 Vaccination as a Condition of Employment for Healthcare Personnel. *InfectionControl & Hospital Epidemiology*, 1-46. doi:10.1017/ice.2021.322
3. American Hospital Association. AHA Policy Statement on Mandatory COVID-19 Vaccination of Health CarePersonnel. July 21, 2021. <https://www.aha.org/public-comments/2021-07-21-aha-policy-statement-mandatory-covid-19-vaccination-health-care>
4. Bacon J. ‘Condition of employment’: Hospitals in DC, across the nation follow Houston Methodist inrequiring vaccination for workers. *USA Today*. Available from: <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/health/2021/06/10/dc-hospitals-others-follow-houston-methodist-requiring-vaccination/7633481002/> [Accessed 22 July 2021].
5. Paulin E. More Nursing Homes Are Requiring Staff COVID-19 Vaccinations. *AARP*. Available from: <https://www.aarp.org/caregiving/health/info-2021/nursing-homes-covid-vaccine-mandate.html> [Accessed 22 July 2021].

### AUTHORITY

South Dakota State Medical Association Policy Council, 11/5/2021; South Dakota State Medical Association Board of Directors, 11/8/2021.