



# COOK COUNTY BUREAU OF HUMAN RESOURCES

**POLICY TITLE: MANDATORY COVID-19 VACCINATION POLICY**

**Effective: May 3, 2022**

**Supersede: August 23, 2021;  
October 20, 2021**

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## **I. OVERVIEW**

In accordance with Cook County’s (“County”) duty to provide and maintain a workplace that is free of known hazards, the County has adopted this mandatory SARS-CoV-2 (“COVID-19”) vaccination policy to safeguard the health of County employees. Public Health authorities have determined that unvaccinated individuals are more likely to contract, transmit and experience more severe symptoms of COVID-19 than individuals who are vaccinated. Those who are vaccinated are less likely to contract and transmit COVID-19.

This policy complies with applicable state and federal laws and is based on relevant public health guidance.

## **II. PURPOSE**

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines to reduce the transmission of COVID-19 and to mitigate the impact of the disease by increasing the percentage of vaccinated employees in the workplace.

## **III. INTENT**

This policy is intended to be interpreted consistent with and subject to applicable law. It supersedes all previous policies and/or memoranda that may have been issued from time to time on subjects covered in this policy. This policy is not intended to supersede or limit the County from enforcing programs or provisions in any applicable collective bargaining agreement. Should any provision in this policy conflict with a specific provision in the Personnel Rules, the provision(s) in this policy shall take precedence.

## **IV. SEVERABILITY**

If any section or provision of this document should be held invalid by operation of law, none of the remainder shall be affected.

## **V. JURISDICTION**

The Bureau of Human Resources (“BHR”) is authorized to develop and issue policies for the effective management of Cook County employees pursuant to section 44-45 of the Cook County Code of Ordinances.



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## **VI. AREAS AFFECTED**

This policy applies to all County employees in Departments in the Offices under the President and/or covered by the Cook County Employment Plan. This policy shall also apply to volunteers, interns, consultants, contract personnel, independent contractors, and personnel working on County premises who are employed by temporary agencies and any other persons or firms doing business for or with Departments in the Offices under the President and/or covered by the Cook County Employment Plan.

## **VII. NONDISCRIMINATION**

Cook County prohibits the discriminatory application, implementation, or enforcement of any provision of this policy on the basis of race, color, sex, age, religion, disability, national origin, ancestry, sexual orientation, marital status, parental status, military discharge status, source of income, gender identity, housing status, or any other protected category established by law, statute, or ordinance.

## **VIII. EQUITY ASSESMENT**

Pursuant to Cook County’s Policy Roadmap, each time BHR creates, reviews, or updates a policy or practice, an equity assessment will occur to assess equity implications. Using the equity assessment tool will build capacity throughout the County to apply an equity lens to all initiatives.

## **IX. DEFINITIONS**

For the purposes of this policy, the following terms shall be given the following meanings as set forth below:

**Fully Vaccinated** - Two weeks after the second dose of a two-dose COVID-19 vaccine or two weeks after one dose of a single-dose vaccine.

**Inactive Employee** - An employee who is out of the office, for a minimum of thirty (30) consecutive days, as a result of one the following approved leaves of absences: Block Family Medical Leave, Duty-Related Disability, Maternity/Paternity Leave, Military Service Leave, Paid Sick Leave, Parental Leave, Personal Leave, Ordinary Disability, Organ Donor Leave, Victims Economic Security Safety Act (VESSA) Leave, Worker’s Compensation, or any other leave provided by a Collective Bargaining Agreement that comports with the minimum out of office duration requirement.

**PCR Test** - A polymerase chain reaction (“PCR”) test that detects genetic material from a specific organism, such as a virus. The test detects the presence of a virus if a person is infected at the time of the test. The PCR test is the “gold standard” test for diagnosing COVID-19.



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## **X. POLICY AND PROCEDURES**

All Cook County employees must be fully vaccinated against COVID-19. Active employees as of the effective date of this policy must be fully vaccinated by October 15, 2021. New employees who start after the effective date of this policy must be either fully vaccinated or submit a request for reasonable accommodation prior to onboarding. Those whose requests for reasonable accommodation are granted may be required to submit to weekly PCR based tests. Employees who are in inactive status will be required to be fully vaccinated or request a reasonable accommodation within eight weeks of returning to active status.

Cook County's vaccine mandate is critical for the health of employees and a requirement to maintain safe in-person operations. Employees may request exemptions from the requirement for medical or religious reasons. Anyone requesting an exemption must access, complete, and submit a medical or religious accommodation request form to the EEO Office to allow for evaluation and determination prior to October 15, 2021.

### **A. Employee Attestation and Proof of Vaccination**

Employees must attest to their vaccination status by October 15<sup>th</sup> and provide proof of vaccination to BHR by submitting their CDC COVID-19 Vaccination Record Card or equivalent, if vaccinated with a World Health Organization approved vaccine in a country not subject to the jurisdiction of the CDC.

An employee, who is no longer in possession of a CDC COVID-19 Vaccination Record Card, may utilize the Illinois Resident Immunization Portal for proof of vaccination, or submit documentation from their vaccination provider. The documentation should include the following information:

- Full Name
- Date of Birth
- Vaccine Manufacturer (i.e., Pfizer, Moderna, Johnson & Johnson, etc.)
- Lot Number
- Date of Vaccination
- Site Location or Signature of Vaccine Administrator



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## **B. Reasonable Accommodation**

Requests for reasonable accommodations due to medical or religious/sincerely held beliefs will be accepted and evaluated consistent with the Reasonable Accommodation Policy for Employees and Applicants with Disabilities, The Americans with Disabilities Act (“ADA”), as amended, 42 U.S.C. § 12101, et seq. and Religious Accommodation Policy Title VII (42 U.S.C. Section 2000e et. seq). Employees must contact the EEO office at [EEO@cookcountyil.gov](mailto:EEO@cookcountyil.gov) to request an application.

The EEO Office will engage in an interactive dialogue to determine whether an accommodation is appropriate and can be granted without imposing an undue hardship. Accommodations may vary based upon the particular circumstances, such as job location, job duties, and work hours. Accommodations may require weekly PCR based COVID-19 testing and enhanced PPE protocols.

## **XI. Penalties**

Failure to follow the provisions of this policy may subject an employee to discipline, up to and including termination of employment in accordance with the Personnel Rules and/or applicable CBA.

## **XII. Policy Modification**

Public health guidance, restrictions and industry best practices regarding COVID-19 and related vaccines are changing rapidly as new information becomes available, further research is conducted, and additional vaccines are approved. The County reserves the right to modify this policy at any time in its sole discretion to adapt to changing circumstances and business needs, consistent with its commitment to maintaining a safe and healthy workplace.

Should guidance be updated to require additional vaccinations, boosters, or treatments, the deadline for obtaining such vaccinations, boosters, or treatments shall be communicated to employees at least thirty (30) days prior to the compliance deadline. Failure to obtain required additional vaccinations, boosters, or treatments shall be considered a violation of this policy and subject employees to discipline action up to and including termination.

## **XIII. Confidentiality**

Documentation or other confirmation of vaccination is considered confidential medical information. All information received in connection with the mandatory vaccination process will be treated confidentially and only disclosed to the extent required by applicable law. Records pertaining to an employee’s vaccination status shall be maintained separately from the employee’s personnel files.