



STATE OF OREGON
Office of the Governor
KATE BROWN

NEWS RELEASE

August 4, 2021

Media Contact:

[Charles Boyle](#), 503-931-7773

Governor Kate Brown Announces New Health and Safety Rule for Employees in Health Care Settings to Help Prevent Delta Variant Spread

Health care workers have a choice to protect staff and patients from COVID-19: weekly testing or verifying vaccination status

(Salem, OR) — Governor Kate Brown announced today that she has directed the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) to issue a rule outlining new, required health and safety measures for personnel in health care settings. The rule requires weekly COVID-19 testing for personnel in health care settings to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in health care settings, which can be waived with a proof of vaccination. The new rule will be issued this week and the requirement to be vaccinated or undergo weekly testing will apply starting September 30th. This will give employers time to prepare for implementation, and will give currently unvaccinated health care workers time to become fully vaccinated.

“The more contagious Delta variant has changed everything. This new safety measure is necessary to stop Delta from causing severe illness among our first line of defense: our doctors, nurses, medical students, and frontline health care workers. Protecting our frontline health care workers through vaccination will also enhance the safety of the patients in their care,” said Governor Brown. “Severe illness from COVID-19 is now largely preventable, and vaccination is clearly our best defense. Vaccination and weekly testing ensure Oregonians can safely access health care and employees can go to work in an environment that maximizes health and safety

measures for COVID-19.”

Scott Palmer of the Oregon Nurses Association (ONA) said: "This is a reasonable and sensible approach which respects the individual choices of health care workers while also protecting public health. ONA believes COVID-19 vaccinations are critical to protecting our members, our patients, our families and our communities and we urge all Oregonians who can get vaccinated to do so now.

"ONA is also gratified to note that Oregon’s current law provides the state the flexibility necessary to respond to public health emergencies via regulation. ONA is eager to continue our work with hospitals and community groups to encourage vaccinations through a wide range of options including free vaccine clinics, vaccine education, vaccination incentives and community outreach to improve vaccination rates and address the rampant disinformation that is creating uncertainty and fueling vaccine hesitancy. Vaccination is a critical tool to keep Oregonians healthy and safe and Governor Brown’s announcement today will help close the gap in vaccination rates for Oregon’s valuable health care workers."

The new rule applies to personnel in health care settings who have direct or indirect contact with patients or infectious materials. The Governor’s Office continues to look at additional health and safety options to protect Oregonians against the highly contagious Delta variant, including vaccination and testing policies for state workers, with conversations continuing with stakeholders about how similar protective measures can be implemented in various state workplaces.

Governor Brown called on other public and private employers in Oregon to consider measures to facilitate their employees’ access to vaccines: “As we have throughout this pandemic, we are learning to adapt to the new reality the Delta variant has created. I am encouraging Oregon cities, counties, businesses, and employers to think creatively, and to consider measures such as paid time off for vaccination, and incentives for employees, in addition to instituting masking requirements and other health and safety measures in the workplace. I am doing the same with the State of Oregon’s workforce, as we look for ways to remove barriers to easy access to vaccination.”

State law currently prohibits employers from independently mandating vaccines for certain limited categories of workers, including health care workers, an issue the Governor intends to work with stakeholders and legislators to address in the February 2022 session.

A video statement from Governor Brown is available [here](#).

###