



Diocese of Rockford

555 Colman Center Drive
P.O. Box 7044
Rockford, Illinois 61125

(815) 399-4300
Fax (815) 399-4769

Office of the Bishop

August 30, 2021 **CORRECTED**

Dear Monsignors/Fathers,

I write to you today following the Executive Order issued on August 26, 2021 by Governor JB Pritzker. This letter explains how the State's vaccine mandates will be implemented in the Diocese of Rockford.

A. Vaccine requirement for all who work or volunteer for a School

As required by the Executive Order, the Diocese is implementing the following:

1. Who must be vaccinated. All individuals who a) work or volunteer at an elementary school or high school and b) are in close contact with other persons in the school for more than 15 minutes at least once a week, must be fully vaccinated. "An individual is 'fully vaccinated against COVID-19' two weeks after receiving the second dose in a two-dose series of a COVID-19 vaccine authorized for emergency use, licensed, or otherwise approved by the US FDA, or two weeks after receiving a single-dose COVID-19 vaccine authorized for emergency use, licensed, or otherwise approved by the US FDA." Workers include not only employees but also third-party contractors who provide services to a school, such as a food service company providing lunches in the school cafeteria. The Executive Order requiring vaccination does not apply to "any person who is present at the school for only a short period of time and whose moments of close physical proximity to others on site are fleeting," such as delivery persons. The vaccination requirement applies to priests assigned to a high school or to a parish with a parish school, or who visit one or more schools and are in close contact with others in the school for more than 15 minutes at least once a week. The Diocese views the vaccine requirement to not extend to individuals picking up and dropping off school children, or to individuals entering the school for a period of no more than 15 minutes, unless they do so more than once per week.
2. Individuals who are not fully vaccinated for any reason. An employee, volunteer, contracted worker, or above-referenced priest who is required to be fully vaccinated and is not, for any reason, including a medical, religious, or any other reason is required by Governor Pritzker's Executive Order to be tested for COVID once a week. Proof of vaccination status and/or a negative test result from COVID testing must be provided to the school administrator for which the person works as an employee or contractor or volunteer. Pastors and administrators are to neither grant nor deny a request for exemption. Rather, an individual who is required to be fully vaccinated and seeks an exemption should be informed that weekly testing for COVID is required of all who are not fully vaccinated.

3. Those who are not fully vaccinated and who do not comply with weekly testing. Individuals who are required to be fully vaccinated and who are not fully vaccinated and who do not comply with weekly testing shall be excluded from the school premises until they comply with testing or are fully vaccinated, as required by the Executive Order. Pastors and administrators should consult with the Diocese about these individuals before making an employment decision.
4. Date by which to Begin Vaccination. The timeline for becoming fully vaccinated is the following: the first dose of a two-dose vaccine or single dose of a single dose vaccine must be completed by September 5, 2021. The second dose, if applicable, must be completed by October 5. Between September 5 and October 5, for those who are taking two doses, weekly testing must occur. Weekly testing must also occur after the second dose, or single dose if a single-dose vaccine, as applicable, for two weeks following the date the dose is received.
5. Date by which to Begin Weekly Testing for those who are not vaccinated. Those who are **not fully** vaccinated must begin weekly testing no later than September 5, 2021 and must provide the school administrator with weekly negative test results every week.
6. Providing Proof of Vaccination Status or Weekly Testing. A copy of a document establishing either proof of full vaccination or a negative result of a COVID test which has been taken between August 30 and September 5 must be given to the school administrator not later than September 5. The school administrator should keep the document in a file designated for each individual employee, volunteer, contracted worker, and applicable priest.

B. Vaccine requirement for all who work and volunteer for a Healthcare Facility

The Diocese has asked the State for clarification whether the Executive Order applies to our employees and volunteers who provide services through Catholic Charities' Ombudsman Program. We will provide an update when we know more.

Governor Pritzker's Executive order provides vaccines are required of all personnel, volunteers, and those contracted to provide services for a healthcare facility, defined to include "ambulatory surgical treatment centers, hospices, hospitals, physician offices, dental offices, free-standing emergency centers, urgent care facilities, birth centers, post-surgical recovery care facilities, end-stage renal disease facilities, long-term care facilities (including skilled and intermediate long-term care facilities licensed under the Nursing Home Care Act, the ID/DD Community Care Act or the MC/DD Act), Specialized Mental Health Rehabilitation Facilities, assisted living facilities, supportive living facilities, medical assistance facilities, mental health centers, outpatient facilities, public health centers, rehabilitation facilities, residential treatment facilities, and adult day care centers." Healthcare facility means both for-profit and non-profit, but not State-owned.

Priests assigned to a healthcare facility as chaplain are required by this provision to be fully vaccinated. Priests and others who visit or bring Holy Communion to patients or residents in these facilities are not required by this provision to be fully vaccinated, because they are not volunteering **for** the healthcare facility.

Individuals who are required by this provision to be fully vaccinated and who are not must be tested for COVID weekly. The same deadlines, testing requirements, and exemptions for the school setting (see Section A, paragraphs 2 – 5 above) apply to the healthcare facilities setting. Review the attached Executive Order for specifics on tests, test facilities that must be used, and providing proof of vaccination or weekly testing.

C. No Vaccination or Testing Requirement for those who provide Religious Education to Students and/or Families

The Executive Order does not apply to religious education programs, even those conducted in one of our school buildings. Therefore, DREs, CREs, and catechists, whether employed or volunteering in those positions, are not required by the Executive Order to be fully vaccinated or get tested for COVID weekly.

This letter will be sent today to Superintendents and Principals, Department Heads, and Regional DREs. I thank you for your continued cooperation.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ *David J. Malloy*

Most Reverend David J. Malloy
Bishop of Rockford