

Statement Supporting OSHA's COVID Vaccine Requirement

Tragically, over 750,000 Americans have died of COVID since the beginning of 2020.¹ Many thousands have died from COVID contracted on the job, such as while caring for patients, supporting the elderly, preparing food for customers, selling goods in stores, and protecting the public from crime, fires, and other threats.

For example, in North Carolina nearly a quarter of COVID clusters are linked to workplace, retail and food settings.² COVID has also inflicted many other societal harms including loss of educational achievement and job opportunities, and increases in mental health challenges and social isolation, all of which have disproportionately hurt the most vulnerable.^{3,4}

To overcome COVID and the highly transmissible Delta variant, and return to “normal,” we need to substantially increase the vaccination rate from its current level of under 60 percent. We need to vaccinate about another quarter of the American population, roughly 80 million more people.

Vaccines are effective in preventing COVID cases, hospitalizations and, most importantly, deaths. Compared to the vaccinated, the unvaccinated are 6 times more likely to contract COVID and 11 times more likely to die.⁵ A recent study shows that in the United States, vaccines are more than five times more effective in preventing serious illness and hospitalization than a previous COVID infection.⁶ Any vaccine risk is considerably less common and less serious than the consequences of contracting COVID.

Finally, we know that vaccine mandates are effective. When employers require workers to get vaccinated, vaccination rates increase to over 90 percent.⁷⁻⁹ This is especially true for people who intended to get vaccinated but have just delayed or procrastinated. Courts have repeatedly supported the legality of employer mandates.

We — physicians, nurses and advanced practice clinicians, health experts, and health care professional societies — fully support the requirement that workers at companies with over 100 workers be vaccinated. This requirement by the Occupational, Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) is reasonable and essential to protect workers.

We encourage all businesses with 100 or more employees to not delay in implementing this standard.

Requiring masks for all unvaccinated workers by the December 5th deadline will be key to keeping customers and fellow workers safe during the holiday shopping and travel season. And getting workers vaccinated or tested by the January 4th deadline will further protect workplaces and communities, bringing us closer to normal life and the end of this pandemic.

From the first day of this pandemic, businesses have wanted to vanquish this virus. Now is their chance to step up and show they are serious. Implementing these commonsense OSHA standards is an important step for our workers, businesses, and the nation as a whole.

References

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