

BJC HealthCare Will Require Employee COVID-19 Vaccination to Protect Against Virus

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ST. LOUIS - Today, BJC HealthCare announced it will require COVID-19 vaccination for employees and those who work in BJC facilities beginning in fall 2021. This is consistent with long-standing practices requiring health care workers to be vaccinated against serious infectious diseases for the safety of patients and staff.

Employees will be required to be fully vaccinated by September 15 in advance of the annual influenza and respiratory illness season, unless granted a medical or religious exception.

As the traditional season for a respiratory viral illness, the fall will bring a high risk for resurgence of COVID-19. With full vaccination of staff, BJC plans to be as prepared as possible when many viral illnesses with similar symptoms will be circulating.

“As a health care provider, major employer, and community leader, BJC wants to ensure we are doing everything we can to keep our patients, our valued workforce, and our communities safe,” said Rich Liekweg, BJC president and CEO. “The available vaccines are among the most effective and safest ever developed. We are pleased that across our organization, we have reached a nearly 75 percent employee vaccination rate. We are now focused on ensuring the 25 percent of our employees who have not yet been vaccinated have access to factual information and can easily obtain the vaccine in advance of the fall respiratory illness season.”

Given the continuing risk of COVID-19 spread in the community, BJC continues to strongly encourage vaccination among the general public as well. Resources to help answer questions about the vaccine, safety, side effects and more, or to schedule, a vaccination are available by visiting bjc.org/vaccinate.

Current vaccines appear to provide significant immunity against most of the COVID-19 variants to date and increased vaccination rates are the most effective measure to prevent a new wave of cases in the community. As further evidence of the effectiveness of the vaccines, despite encouraging drops in overall COVID-19 cases in the community, the virus is continuing to spread easily in unvaccinated populations, where case rates look similar to months ago.

“Making COVID vaccine mandatory is the most important thing we can do to protect our team members and our patients,” added Liekweg. “The availability of the vaccine represents our most promising path forward to a return to the lives we’ve all been missing so much. Already, we see the vaccine’s positive impact on the health of our community – physically and emotionally – as vaccinated individuals resume activities with family and friends.”

BJC HealthCare is one of the largest nonprofit health care organizations in the United States, delivering services to residents primarily in the greater St. Louis, southern Illinois and mid-Missouri regions. Serving the health care needs of urban, suburban and rural communities, BJC includes 15 hospitals and multiple health service organizations. Services include inpatient and outpatient care, primary care, community health and

wellness, workplace health, home health, community mental health, rehabilitation, long-term care and hospice. BJC's nationally recognized academic hospitals, Barnes-Jewish and St. Louis Children's hospitals, are affiliated with Washington University School of Medicine.