

State Reaches First Union Agreement For Vaccine Mandate In Illinois' Congregate Facilities

September 20 2021 1:19 PM



SPRINGFIELD – Governor JB Pritzker today announced Illinois' first union agreement requiring vaccines for certain state workers in congregate facilities.

The agreement covers approximately 260 supervisory employees at the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) and the Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) which are represented by VR-704. Employees must receive their first shot by October 14, 2021. Should an employee elect a two-dose vaccine, they must receive the second shot by November 18.

State employees who remain unvaccinated pose a significant risk to individuals in the Illinois congregate facilities. Therefore, if employees do not receive the vaccine or an exemption by the dates identified, progressive disciplinary measures will be implemented, which may ultimately lead to discharge. The agreement includes a process whereby employees can seek an exemption based on medical contraindications or sincerely held religious beliefs.

“With new variants among us, the quick spread of COVID-19 in congregate settings in Illinois and across the nation continues to harm the most vulnerable among us,” said Governor JB Pritzker. “We have a safe and proven tool to end this pandemic, and vaccination remains the most effective way to protect ourselves, our loved ones, and our communities. I’m proud to reach this agreement with these critical labor partners and applaud VR-704 for taking this critical step to combat the virus and keep all of our State residents safe.”

Last month, Governor Pritzker announced that all state workers who work in state-run congregate facilities would be required to receive the COVID-19 vaccine, that includes employees at IDOC and DJJ, the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS), and the Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs (IDVA), subject to bargaining. Negotiations between the unions representing the rest of the workforce impacted by this mandate are ongoing.

“When staff take the life-saving vaccine, they are protecting their colleagues, individuals in custody, and communities while moving the agency closer to normal operations,” said Rob Jeffreys, Director of the Illinois Department of Corrections. “This commitment will help IDOC overcome the challenges associated with infection control in congregate living environments.”

To further encourage vaccinations under the agreement with VR-704, employees will receive an additional personal day. If the vaccine administration is not available during an employee’s regularly scheduled shift, the employee may be compensated at their regular pay for the time taken to receive the vaccine. In addition, vaccinated employees will receive paid “COVID time,” so that if a vaccinated employee gets COVID-19, or must quarantine due to COVID-19, they will receive a period of paid time off without using their benefit time.

The administration has taken extensive measures to make the COVID-19 vaccine equitable and accessible. The Pritzker administration established 25 mass vaccination sites. The Illinois National Guard supported more than 800 mobile vaccination clinics on top of an additional 1,705 state-supported mobile sites that focused on communities

hardest hit by the pandemic, young residents, and rural communities. The COVID-19 vaccine has been available for healthcare and nursing home workers since December 15, 2020, and open to teachers since January 25, 2021.

Vaccination is the key to ending the COVID-19 pandemic and returning to normal life. All Illinois residents over the age of 12 are eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine at no cost and proof of immigration status is not required to receive the vaccine. To find a vaccination center near you, visit [vaccines.gov](https://www.vaccines.gov).