

State Reaches Two New Union Agreements To Ensure Nearly 1,300 More State Workers In Congregate Facilities Are Vaccinated

October 8 2021 1:09 PM



SPRINGFIELD – After recently reaching Illinois’ first union agreement requiring vaccines for certain state workers, Governor JB Pritzker announced two new agreements with the Illinois Nurses Association and Illinois Federation of Public Employees that will ensure nearly 1,300 more state employees are protected with the COVID-19 vaccines.

The agreement with the Illinois Nurses Association covers about 1,100 nurses working in 24/7 facilities like McFarland Mental Health Facility, Quincy Veterans' Home and Jacksonville Correctional Center. The agreement with the Illinois Federation of Public Employees covers about 160 employees working in Human Services and Veterans' Affairs. Employees must receive their first shot by October 14. 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 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.

"Vaccinations are helping to keep our schools and businesses open, protecting our children, our workers and our customers from getting sick with this deadly virus," said Governor JB Pritzker. "We've now reached three agreements to ensure the workers at our congregate facilities will be taking the most powerful action they can by getting vaccinated to keep themselves and the residents they serve safe. I'm proud to reach these agreements and applaud the Illinois Nurses Association and Illinois Federation of Public Employees for working to keep our state safe. Millions more residents are being called to do their part, and I thank President Biden for his leadership in rallying employers to keep people healthy."

Illinois reached its first union agreement with VR-704 on September 20, 2021, covering 260 supervisory employees at the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) and the Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ). The first agreement came after Gov. Pritzker announced that all state workers who work in state-run congregate facilities would be required to receive the COVID-19 vaccine, spanning IDOC, 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.

To further encourage vaccinations under the agreement with the unions, 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.

“We are pleased that we were able to collaborate with CMS to reach this agreement. Our union always strives to ensure that members’ rights and safety are protected, and their voices are heard,” said Matt Emigholz, President of the Illinois Federation of Public Employees, Local 4408. “We believe that this agreement provides options for employees while offering them a way to do what they are committed to — providing excellent service to the citizens of Illinois.”

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).