



FAQs About COVID-19 Vaccines for Education Employees

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1. When will education employees be eligible to receive a COVID-19 vaccine?

Pending widespread availability of a COVID-19 vaccine, Illinois has a phased, priority-based vaccination plan. Education employees are expected to be among the designated “essential workers” eligible to receive a vaccine in Phase 1(b).

2. Are school nurses eligible to receive a COVID-19 vaccine during Phase 1(a)?

No. The State classifies school nurses as education employees who are expected to become eligible for a vaccine during Phase 1(b).

3. Are there any governmental mandates requiring people to receive a COVID-19 vaccine?

No. There is no federal or state mandate to receive a COVID-19 vaccine. That said, the CDC recommends a vaccine for Americans 16 and over.

4. Can an employer mandate its employees to receive a COVID-19 vaccine when it becomes available?

Absent certain exemptions and bargaining obligations, it’s likely that an employer may mandate its employees to receive a COVID-19 vaccine.

5. What potential employee exemptions exist for taking a COVID-19 vaccine?

Yes, there are potential exemptions that exist. Employees may be entitled to an exemption to a vaccine requirement under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). An employee may request a reasonable accommodation, such as wearing a mask or working remotely. Employees also may be entitled to an exemption under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 based on a sincerely held religious belief, as an objection to the vaccine. For a more detailed analysis please refer to the EEOC’s recently updated guidance titled, [What You Should Know About COVID-19 and the ADA, the Rehabilitation Act, and other EEO Laws](#), particularly Questions K5, K6 and K7.

6. Are employer COVID-19 vaccine mandates subject to collective bargaining?

Yes, absent collective bargaining agreement language that limits bargaining rights, a vaccine mandate and related changes to terms and conditions of employment are subject to collective bargaining. Local leaders with questions about an employer's duty to bargain a proposed vaccine mandate should reach out to their assigned UniServ Director.

7. Is there data or guidance about whether it is safe for pregnant people to receive a COVID-19 vaccine?

Currently, there is limited data about the safety of COVID-19 vaccines for pregnant people. As such, the CDC recommends that the decision whether a pregnant person receives a COVID-19 vaccine remains a personal choice made in consultation with their medical professional. For a more information, please review CDC's recently issued guidance titled, [Vaccination Considerations for People Who are Pregnant or Breastfeeding](#).

8. Is there data or guidance about whether it is safe for people who are breastfeeding to receive a COVID-19 vaccine?

The CDC reports that there are not thought to be health risks for infants being breastfed by someone who receives a COVID-19 vaccine. However, there is presently no available information about the impact of COVID-19 vaccines on people who are lactating, milk production, or on breastfed infants. People who are breastfeeding and are part of a group recommended to receive a COVID-19 vaccine, such as essential workers, should reach out to their medical professional to process any questions related to the safety of taking a COVID-19 vaccine. For more information, please review CDC's guidance document referenced in FAQ #7.