



New Public Health Order to Require Vaccination for Health Care Workers in Acute Care Settings - updated September 14

September 14, 2021

BC's Public Health Officer Dr. Bonnie Henry announced yesterday new public health orders for mandatory vaccination against COVID-19 for all employees working in acute care settings. This includes acute care health care professionals who deliver patient care in the community, including in people's homes.

HSA members working in these settings will be subject to the order, which requires COVID-19 vaccination as a condition of employment. This follows a similar order for long-term care settings announced last month.

Employees will have until October 26, 2021 to be fully vaccinated and must provide the employer with their personal health information to confirm vaccination status. Until October 26, unvaccinated staff must wear personal protective equipment (PPE) and be tested regularly for COVID-19.

Further details on these new public health orders are expected in the coming days. The union will be reviewing the order when it is released, and we will keep you updated as further information becomes available.

HSA members have been on the frontlines of the COVID-19 pandemic and are dedicated to keeping all British Columbians healthy and safe.

We are proud that 93% of our members sought vaccination voluntarily. Vaccination is a proven and essential tool for protecting each other at all times, but especially during a global pandemic.

However, mandatory vaccination does present a number of serious questions, and HSA is in discussion with employers, the Ministry of Health, and the Provincial Health Officer to ensure those concerns are factored into the application of the vaccine mandate.

Further, personal privacy of workers subject to mandatory vaccination must be protected at all times, and accommodation must be made for those who cannot receive the vaccine due to medical or religious reasons.

HSA does not believe that termination or threats of discipline are effective means to increasing vaccination rates. While we recognize the need for a vaccine mandate at this time, the union will defend the interests of our members and insist that employers respect collective agreement rights.

Finally, it must be noted that mandatory vaccination may take some health science professionals off the job, seriously impacting delivery of care at a time when shortages have already stretched people to the limit. This is a challenge the government must turn its full attention to going forward.

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