

COVID-19 vaccine requirements: Why U.S. doctors support them

DEC 15, 2021

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Editor's note: *In late December, the AMA joined other medical associations in support of the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services' (CMS) vaccine requirement in health care organizations. They filed amicus briefs with the U.S. Supreme Court in the cases of Biden v. Missouri (PDF), Becerra v. Louisiana (PDF), and National Federation of Independent Business v. Department of Labor, OSHA (PDF). The high court will hear oral arguments Jan. 7 on the CMS and OSHA vaccine requirements.*

With federal health officials warning that the SARS-CoV-2 Omicron variant is already spreading quickly in the U.S. and is likely to peak with a huge caseload in January, American doctors are redoubling their support for COVID-19 vaccination—and vaccine requirements—as the best way to save lives and keep patients out of the hospital.

The scientific experts at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention say that booster doses can effectively fight the Omicron variant, which now has joined the SARS-CoV-2 Delta variant in a kind of tag team of viral attack.

That is just one huge reason why the AMA is continuing its legal efforts in support of policies that require widespread COVID-19 vaccination. In a newly filed set of amicus briefs, the AMA urged the 6th and 11th U.S. Circuit Courts of Appeals to stay lower-court orders denying enforcement of the Safer Federal Workforce Task Force's Guidance for Federal Contractors and Subcontractors.

The AMA-led amicus briefs in *Kentucky v. Biden* and *Georgia v. Biden* were joined by more than a dozen leading medical organizations representing family doctors, pediatricians, allergists and immunologists, clinical pathologists, and more. They all recognize COVID-19 as a grave danger to public health and support widespread vaccination requirements as the most effective strategy to end the COVID-19 pandemic.

Halting enforcement of the guidance requiring federal contractor vaccination would “severely and irreparably harm workers and undermine the public interest,” the briefs noted. Vaccines provide a safe and effective way to protect against transmission of COVID-19 in the workplace and across the nation, as shown by a body of well-regarded scientific evidence from rigorous clinical trials.

The AMA has also filed several briefs in courts around the country in support of the emergency temporary standard issued by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) to protect the health and safety of U.S. workers, families and communities across the nation.

The AMA has been tracking the need for COVID-19 vaccine requirements since the three safe and effective vaccines that have been authorized or approved in the U.S. became widely and easily accessible across the country at no cost to patients. Find below a few of the AMA’s best news articles supporting the case for COVID-19 vaccination requirements.

1 The time to require COVID-19 vaccination is now

The Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine’s earning full approval from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in September marked a turning point in support for employer vaccine requirements.

“The meticulously collected evidence from more than 100 million vaccinated Americans is clear: The vaccines we have to defeat COVID-19 are safe, effective, and the only way out of this pandemic,” AMA President Gerald E. Harmon, MD, said at the time, noting that “vaccine supply is ample, and for months, access has been easier.”

2 Yes, physicians are obliged to get vaccinated against COVID-19

When there’s a safe, effective vaccine to help prevent spread of a pandemic disease, physicians without a medical contraindication have an ethical duty to become immunized. That was the upshot of a new addition to the AMA *Code of Medical Ethics*. And American doctors have lived up to that ethical obligation, with over 96% of U.S. physicians fully vaccinated against COVID-19. Also, read more about why COVID-19 vaccination should be required for health professionals.

3 What doctors wish employers knew about COVID-19 vaccine requirements

As the push to get more people vaccinated against COVID-19 intensifies, businesses, schools, cities, states and the federal government are turning to vaccine mandates. Two physician experts detailed the key things that employers and other organizations should keep in mind as they implement requirements, send tailored messages to employees, and address inevitable concerns.

4

Federal courts must preserve OSHA’s vaccine mandate

Workplace transmission has been a major factor in the spread of COVID-19, with outbreaks across numerous industries, including service and sales, education, hospitality, construction, domestic work, meat-processing, transportation, prison and health care. Learn more about the AMA’s advocacy in federal courts in support of OSHA’s COVID-19 vaccination-and-testing emergency temporary standard for employers with 100 or more employees.

5

Straight talk vital for this health system’s vaccine requirement

The Seattle-based Virginia Mason Franciscan Health System has long been a leader in health care quality improvement and patient safety. In this in-depth Q&A, AMA member Christopher Baliga, MD—an infectious disease specialist and medical director for infection prevention—explained the importance of frank conversations with health professionals as part of the system’s successful implementation of its COVID-19 vaccine requirement.

6

How Permanente doctors are pushing ahead with a vaccine mandate

All eight Permanente Medical Groups, as part of integrated health care system-Kaiser Permanente, implemented such a requirement this summer following recurrent surges of the virus in its hospitals and clinics.

“As a health care leader, the way you demonstrate leadership during this pandemic is to get vaccinated and to mandate it,” said Steven Parodi, MD, national infectious disease leader for Kaiser Permanente and associate executive director for the Permanente Medical Group, a member of the AMA Health System Program.

The AMA recognizes the critical importance of scientific integrity, transparency and public trust in the fight to contain the global spread of COVID-19. Stay updated with the AMA on COVID-19 and vaccine

development.