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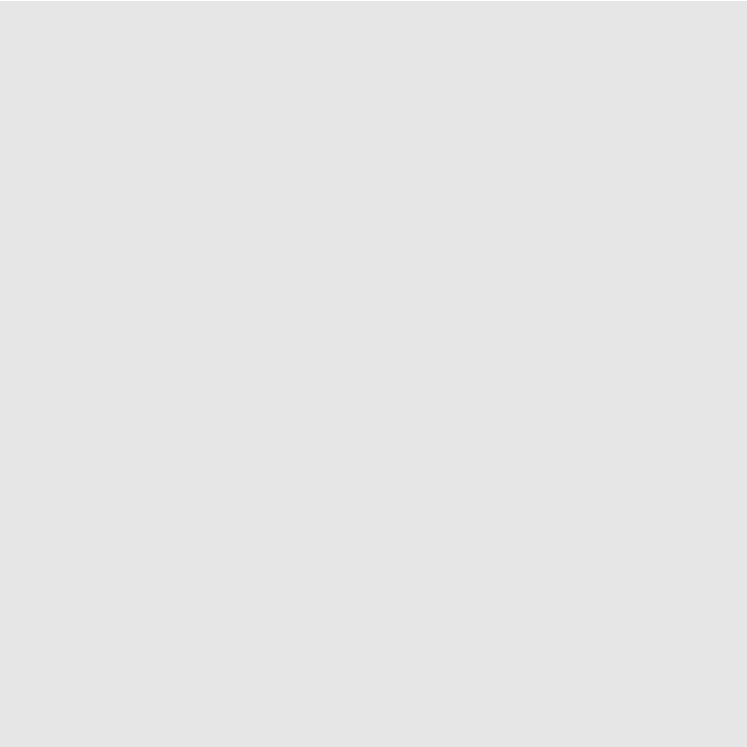
News

Hogan Institutes Stricter Vaccine Protocols for Workers at Md. Nursing Homes, Hospitals

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Maryland Gov. Larry Hogan provided an update on the state's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Wednesday, Aug. 18, 2021.

ANNAPOLIS, Md. (WBOC/CBS)- Maryland Gov. Larry Hogan on Wednesday instituted new vaccination protocols at the state's hospitals and nursing homes to require that staff provide proof of vaccination against COVID-19.

Workers at at of the state's 227 nursing homes and all hospitals in the state will be required to get their first vaccine shot by Sept. 1. Any worker who doesn't have proof of vaccination will be submitted to ongoing COVID-19 screening and testing.

"We are concerned that the Delta variant surge has led to an increase in infections among nursing home staff, which has been a consistent source of the outbreaks in these facilities," said Hogan. "Our main focus has always been, and continues to be, reducing hospitalizations and deaths, particularly among our most vulnerable Marylanders."

Employees of Maryland nursing homes will need to receive their first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine by Sept. 1. Nursing homes that fail to comply with the new vaccination protocols or to report their vaccination data will be subject to increased fines, civil penalties, and enforcement actions.

Employees of hospitals statewide will also need to receive their first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine by Sept. 1. Many of the state's largest hospital systems, including the University of Maryland Medical System, Johns Hopkins Medicine, MedStar, and GBMC Healthcare, have already mandated vaccines for staff, according to Hogan.

"(Some hospital groups) have already led by example by mandating vaccines for hospital staffs, but not every hospital has taken action, and some continue to have far too many unvaccinated health care workers needlessly exposing their vulnerable patients in hospitals," Hogan said.

While at least 18 nursing homes have staff vaccination rates at 95% or higher, there were some where fewer than half of workers and caretakers have received the shot, Hogan said, "which is unacceptable and which is endangering the lives of nursing home residents."

Hogan expressed concern that the more contagious Delta variant of COVID-19 could lead to more outbreaks at nursing homes in the state.

While many of the state's largest medical systems, such as Johns Hopkins, the University of Maryland Medical System, MedStar and GBMC Healthcare, have already required employees to get the shot, not all hospitals in the state have a vaccination policy, Hogan said.

"And some continue to have far too many unvaccinated healthcare workers needlessly exposing their vulnerable patients and hospitals to COVID-19 and the Delta variant," he said. "Eight full months after vaccines have been available to healthcare workers, this is simply not acceptable."

Across Maryland, 94% of seniors have been vaccinated, compared with 79.5% of eligible adults overall, Hogan said.

The governor also called on the federal government to take the following actions:

- **Make booster shots available immediately for seniors and vulnerable populations.** Following Wednesday morning's announcement by federal health officials that boosters will not be made more widely available until late September, Hogan called on the federal government to make booster shots available immediately for seniors and other vulnerable populations.
- **Advance full FDA approval of vaccines.** Hogan pressed for full FDA approval of the COVID-19 vaccines, which remains the most significant hurdle to reaching those who are still hesitant about getting vaccinated. Full approval would be a significant boost to the state's vaccine distribution operation.
- **Expedite approval of vaccines for 5- to 11-year-olds.** With more and more children heading back to school, the governor also urged federal officials to expedite approval for 5- to 11-year-olds to begin receiving COVID-19 vaccines. Governors have been told that approval is currently months away.

"Governors across the country have become increasingly frustrated with the confusing messaging and conflicting guidance from the White House and federal government agencies regarding booster shots for the wider population," said Hogan. "This is one of a number of areas where we are pressing the Biden administration for action."

Antibody Testing Program. In preparation for booster shots being made more widely available, Hogan announced the launch of a new statewide antibody testing program for nursing home residents to ascertain their levels of immunity. The pilot program will begin with 500 residents across the state and will provide critical data regarding the need for booster shots.

Monoclonal Antibody Therapy. State health officials are strongly recommending monoclonal antibodies—which have proven to be effective against the Delta variant—for patients with mild to moderate symptoms of COVID-19. Thousands of Marylanders have already been given monoclonal antibody therapy at dozens of hospitals and facilities across the state, and it has helped prevent hundreds of hospitalizations and deaths.

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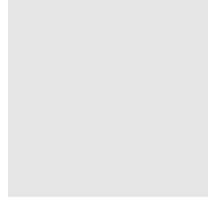
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