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Fitzgerald Announces Mask Mandate For Unvaccinated County Workers

90.5 WESA | By [Lucy Perkins](#)

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Sarah Kovash / 90.5 WESA

Allegheny County Executive Rich Fitzgerald said unvaccinated county employees must wear masks and submit to “constant” COVID-19 testing following the recent surge in cases.

“As President Biden has said, this is a pandemic only among the unvaccinated,” Fitzgerald said on Thursday. “What we’ve seen over the last couple of weeks are increases in case numbers. Thankfully the hospitalization and fatality numbers remain low, but we are concerned.”

Roughly two-thirds of county employees already are vaccinated, according to Fitzgerald, who touted a county vaccination plan that paid county employees \$100 if they got vaccinated.

“We have over 6,000 employees who serve the public, who come into contact with the public on a daily basis,” Fitzgerald said. “We want [the public] to feel that the person they’re talking with, the person we’re dealing with, isn’t going to give them COVID.”

Any unvaccinated individual who enters a county building also will be required to wear a mask.

But while Allegheny County is not issuing a vaccine mandate to its current employees, all future hires will need to be vaccinated, starting Monday.



“We are not going to hire anybody, going forward, that does not have a vaccine card,” Fitzgerald said, noting that the county typically hires between 500 and 1,000 people every year.

Fitzgerald said he met with private businesses in southwestern Pennsylvania in recent weeks as the county formulated its response. He said he imagines many will also take similar steps soon to slow the spread of the virus.

“Most of the employers I talked to are moving in a similar direction,” he said. “Not everyone will do it exactly the way Allegheny County government is doing it, but many...have already put out announcements.”

The county’s uptick in cases led the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [to escalate](#) Allegheny County from the ‘moderate’ to ‘substantial’ transmission rate category earlier this week, meaning there were more than 50 cases reported per 100,000 residents.

Allegheny County Health Department Director Dr. Debra L. Bogen said Wednesday that according to limited data, 20 percent of vaccinated people have tested positive for COVID-19 due to the highly contagious delta variant.

The latest CDC guidance states that both vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals should wear masks indoors in areas with substantial virus spread.

According to the most recent data, 61.7 percent of all Allegheny County residents are fully vaccinated.

The announcement Thursday came just one day after Fitzgerald and Bogen said they support the CDC’s masking guidance, but the county would not be enacting its own mandate for county residents.

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