



News

King County Executive
Dow Constantine

King County, State of Washington and City of Seattle announce vaccination requirement for most employees, private health care and long-term care workers

August 9, 2021

Summary

King County, in coordination with the State of Washington and the City of Seattle, announced that 13,500 executive branch employees will be required to be vaccinated by mid-October.

Story

King County Executive Dow Constantine announced King County will now require all employees to be fully vaccinated, effective Oct. 18, 2021. To meet this requirement, employees must have received their second shot of a Pfizer or Moderna vaccine, or first shot of a Johnson & Johnson vaccine, by Oct. 4, 2021, and provide verified proof of vaccination. The requirement will apply to employees in the Executive branch, including the Assessor, Elections, and Sheriff's Office.

"A healthy King County depends on every eligible resident getting vaccinated. With the Delta variant surging, it is high time for everyone to do their part to protect one another, our children, and our economy," said Executive Constantine. "Joining with the state and the City of Seattle, we're helping close the vaccination gaps in our community and our workforce, to get everyone across the finish line and move our community forward into recovery."

Below is the release issued by the Governor's Office:

Gov. Jay Inslee today announced a requirement for most state workers, and on-site contractors and volunteers to be vaccinated against COVID-19 as a condition of employment. State employees and workers in private health care and long-term care settings will have until October 18 to be fully vaccinated.

The requirement applies to state workers, regardless of teleworking status. This applies to executive cabinet agencies, but the governor encouraged all others such as higher education, local governments, the legislative branch, other statewide elected officials and organizations in the

private sector to do the same.

"It is the mission of public servants and those providing health care to serve our fellow Washingtonians. These workers live in every community in our state, working together and with the public every day to deliver services," Inslee said. "We have a duty to protect them from the virus, they have the right to be protected, and the communities they serve and live in deserve protection as well."

The governor made the announcement at a press conference on Monday at Kaiser Permanente in Seattle. He was joined by Seattle Mayor Jenny Durkan, King County Executive Dow Constantine, Kaiser Permanente Washington President Susan Mullaney, Washington State Secretary of Health Dr. Umair Shah, and Seattle-King County Public Health Officer Dr. Jeffrey Duchin.

"State employees, health care and long-term care workers are extremely pivotal in the fight against COVID-19, and we hope these steps will further our goal of getting as many people vaccinated," Secretary of Health Dr. Umair A. Shah, MD, MPH, said. "We should all be concerned with the increases of COVID-19 cases in our state and we know that vaccines are our best tool to end this pandemic."

The announcement comes as Washington is experiencing a severe increase in COVID cases and hospitalizations in every county, due to the Delta variant, with the overwhelming majority of cases and hospitalizations being among unvaccinated Washingtonians.

Prior to the governor's announcement, Kaiser Permanente WA mandated that it would be requiring all its employees to be vaccinated. "The growing threat of the Delta variant has put our unvaccinated communities in a serious and precarious situation. We have at our disposal the key to ending this deadly surge and even the pandemic — vaccines," said Susan Mullaney, president of Kaiser Permanente Washington. "As the largest integrated health care provider in the state of Washington, Kaiser Permanente has taken the important step of requiring that all employees and physicians be fully vaccinated. We look forward to working with the governor, the state, labor partners and our fellow health care systems to protect our state."

King County leads the state in vaccinations, with approximately 81.5% of eligible residents 12 years of age and older having initiated their vaccination series, 12% higher than the statewide average as of August 2.

"No patient should have to worry about getting COVID-19 from their health care provider, period," said Jeff Duchin, King County Public Health officer. "Requiring COVID-19 vaccination for health care personnel protects not only patients and health care workers, but also their families and our community — including those who cannot be vaccinated or do not respond to the vaccine due to being immunocompromised. I thank Governor Inslee for taking this important action as the threat of COVID-19 is increasing locally and nationally."

This new requirement includes well-defined exemptions to the vaccine. Individuals with legitimate medical reasons or sincerely held religious reasons will be exempt. The exemptions do not include personal or philosophical objections.

To keep staff, families and communities safe, there will be no test-out option for employees. Past opt-out testing policies in congregate facilities for unvaccinated staff have not been efficient at preventing outbreaks that impact employees, clients and families, resulting in the loss of life of dedicated staff. Providing a test-out option would be both a financial burden for staff and taxpayers and ineffective at protecting the lives of Washingtonians.

Employees who refuse to be vaccinated will be subject to dismissal from employment for failing to meet legal job qualifications. The state will work with labor organizations on meeting collective bargaining obligations and adhering to civil service rules.

The City of Seattle and King County also announced a COVID-19 vaccination requirement for their employees.

"From the initial days of the COVID-19 pandemic to today, Governor Inslee, Executive Constantine and I believe in the importance of speaking as one government. So many small businesses have stepped up to require vaccines and as some of Washington's largest employers, we are too. The spread of the Delta variant has required that we continue to make decisions that are safe for our employees, their families and our community. There is no doubt that vaccines work, and that they are our best defense against the highly contagious Delta variant," said Mayor Jenny Durkan. "Seattle has led the way by listening to our public health officials- it's why we have the lowest cases, hospitalizations and deaths of every major city. It is crucial that in our workplaces where we work, eat, have meetings, and laugh together, we make sure we are doing what we can to keep ourselves and our colleagues, our children and families, customers, and members of the public safe from serious illness, hospitalization, or death from this virus."

"A healthy King County depends on every eligible resident getting vaccinated. With the Delta variant surging, it is high time for everyone to do their part to protect one another, our children and our economy," said Dow Constantine, King County executive. "Joining with the state and the City of Seattle, we're helping close the vaccination gaps in our community and our workforce, to get everyone across the finish line and move our community forward into recovery."

"Getting vaccinated against COVID is a public good. We have come so close to defeating this deadly disease," Inslee said. "We have the tool — the vaccine — to get this era behind us. It is safe, it is effective, and you will never regret getting it."

Quotes

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Dow Constantine, King County Executive



It is the mission of public servants and those providing health care to serve our fellow Washingtonians. These workers live in every community in our state, working together and with the public every day to deliver services. We have a duty to protect them from the virus, they have the right to be protected, and the communities they serve and live in deserve protection as well. Getting vaccinated against COVID is a public good. We have come so close to defeating this deadly disease. We have the tool — the vaccine — to get this era behind us. It is safe, it is effective, and you will never regret getting it.

Jay Inslee, Washington State Governor



State employees, health care and long-term care workers are extremely pivotal in the fight against COVID-19, and we hope these steps will further our goal of getting as many people vaccinated. We should all be concerned with the increases of COVID-19 cases in our state and we know that vaccines are our best tool to end this pandemic.

Dr Umair A. Shah, MD,MPH, Secretary of Health



The growing threat of the Delta variant has put our unvaccinated communities in a serious and precarious situation. We have at our disposal the key to ending this deadly surge and even the pandemic — vaccines. As the largest integrated health care provider in the state of Washington, Kaiser Permanente has taken the important step of requiring that all employees and physicians be fully vaccinated. We look forward to working with the governor, the state, labor partners and our fellow health care systems to protect our state.

Susan Mullaney, President of Kaiser Permanente Washington



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Jeff Duchin, MD, King County Public Health Officer

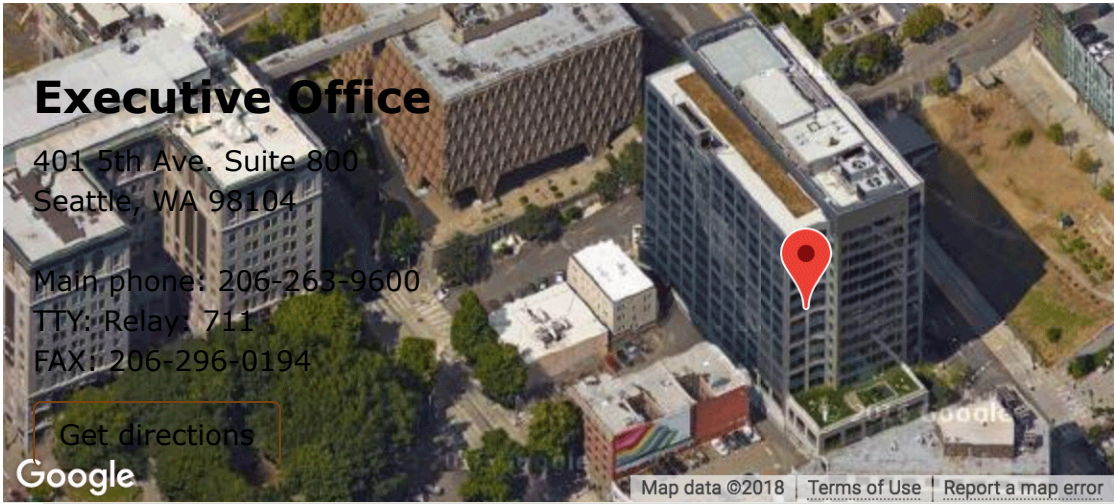


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Jenny Durkan, City of Seattle Mayor

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

Chase Gallagher, Executive Office, 206-263-8537



Executive Office

401 5th Ave. Suite 800
Seattle, WA 98104

Main phone: 206-263-9600
TTY: Relay: 711
FAX: 206-296-0194

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Dow Constantine



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