

## KING COUNTY HOUSING AUTHORITY

### COVID-19 Vaccination Policy

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**PURPOSE:** In accordance with the King County Housing Authority's responsibility to provide and maintain a safe work environment, KCHA is instating a COVID-19 vaccination requirement to safeguard the health of our employees and their families; our clients; residents; guests; and the community at large. The context for this policy is a deadly surge in the transmission and contraction of COVID-19, primarily by and among unvaccinated individuals, and the implementation of vaccination requirements by Washington State, King County and the City of Seattle.

KCHA acknowledges that some staff may have concerns about the vaccine, especially individuals who are members of communities historically and currently discriminated against. We offer opportunities and resources to support fact-based decision-making. The COVID-19 vaccines have been scientifically proven to be safe and highly effective at reducing serious illness and death within the workplace and the greater community. Staff are encouraged to speak with their medical provider or trusted medical and scientific experts for questions or concerns. Useful information about the vaccine can be found on the [Public Health – Seattle & King County website and CDC](#).

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We respect those staff seeking medical or religious exemptions, and those who fully qualify for such exemptions may continue employment with KCHA and follow all COVID-19 operational protocols if reasonable accommodation is approved.

**SCOPE:** This policy applies to all King County Housing Authority (KCHA) employees and temporary hires and temporary workers assigned to KCHA from employment agencies and employees who are represented by our labor partners (i.e. unions).

**RESPONSIBILITY:**

**Human Resources in conjunction with legal counsel** will be responsible for administering this policy and the exemption process.

**Employees** are responsible for reporting their vaccination status to Human Resources via Apricity as described in the Reporting Requirement section of the policy by the February 28, 2022 deadline.

**POLICY:** As a condition of employment, all current and future KCHA employees, both regular and temporary, must have completed a full vaccination cycle with a U.S. FDA-authorized COVID-19 vaccine and provide documentation proving their fully vaccinated status to KCHA by February 28, 2022. For purposes of this Guidance, people are considered fully vaccinated if they have received COVID-19 vaccines currently approved or authorized for emergency use by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna, and Johnson & Johnson [J&J]/Janssen COVID-19 vaccines) or COVID-19 vaccines that have been listed for emergency use by the World Health Organization (e.g., AstraZeneca/Oxford). Someone is fully vaccinated two weeks after they have received the second dose of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine; or two weeks after receiving a single dose of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine. This requirement includes keeping up to date with booster vaccinations if required by public health agencies, once boosters are available locally and you qualify, and complying with additional safety measures and protocols in the future.

KCHA will allow one day of COVID emergency sick pay to employees for each COVID vaccine dose appointment scheduled during their normal work hours.

New hires and temporary workers hired after December 01, 2021 must submit their proof of vaccination to Human Resources after an employment offer/assignment and before their first day of employment. Absent a qualifying religious or medical exemption and the ability to make reasonable accommodation, KCHA will rescind any employment offers or placements if we do not receive proof of fully vaccinated status at the time employment is scheduled to begin.

Unvaccinated workers who are on an approved leave of absence before February 28, 2022 will be required to show proof of fully vaccinated status before returning to work. If they need more time to complete the cycle, they will need to contact Human Resources. They will need to use their accrued sick or annual leave, or take leave without pay.

Timeline: On December 1, 2021, KCHA informed staff of the intent to institute this policy. This policy will remain in effect for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic or until it is determined by KCHA that it is no longer needed based on the threat of the virus and public health guidance. February 28, 2022 is the deadline for all KCHA staff to be fully vaccinated. March 1 through March 30, 2022 is the paid administrative leave period for eligible staff who will be separating from employment due to non-compliance with the vaccine requirement. March 31, 2022 concludes the initial implementation of the vaccination requirement and the paid administrative leave benefit.

The King County Housing Authority will continue to follow applicable laws and public health guidance, and staff must continue to adhere to KCHA's COVID-19 protocols and policies as required.

## **PROCEDURE:**

### **I. Reporting Requirement:**

Human Resources is the agency's coordinating unit for COVID-19 vaccination reporting and tracking. Individuals must demonstrate full vaccination by providing the following information to Human Resources via Apricity by February 28, 2022 at midnight:

1. A copy/picture of their official CDC COVID-19 Vaccination card; or
2. Documentation of vaccination from a health care provider or electronic health record; or
3. State immunization information system record (find your COVID-19 vaccination record at the State's website: [MyIRmobile.com](http://MyIRmobile.com)), or
4. For an individual who was vaccinated outside of the United States, a reasonable equivalent of any of the above.

### **II. Exemptions from COVID-19 Vaccination**

Individuals may request an exemption from the COVID-19 vaccine requirement as a reasonable accommodation for the following:

- a. Medical Exemption as advised by a licensed healthcare provider;
- b. Religious Exemption for a sincerely held religious belief, observance or practice that prevents an individual from receiving the vaccine. A religious belief need not be one held by a formal religious organization (theistic) but can be a non-theistic, strongly held moral or ethical belief. Every request for a religious exemption will be carefully reviewed, but in general, belief based on social, political, or economic philosophies, as well as mere personal preferences, are not considered religious beliefs under federal or state law.

Requests for exemptions must be sent to Human Resources by email at [HRCOVIDOPS@kcha.org](mailto:HRCOVIDOPS@kcha.org) and will be reviewed by a representative from HR and legal counsel as part of the accommodation process. To ensure all exemption requests can be resolved by February 28, 2022, please submit your application as early as possible but no later than December 29, 2021 at midnight.

KCHA has partnered with law firm Ogden Murphy Wallace, P.L.L.C. to review exemption requests to evaluate the nature and validity of the request in alignment with EEOC guidelines. If more information is

needed, HR will contact you with additional questions. If sufficient information was provided, HR will provide the requestor a written determination of approval or denial of the exemptions.

Staff will be notified if the request meets the exemption criteria, and, if so, whether the exemption is permanent or provisional. Human Resources will outline expectations for continued safety measures including wearing face coverings, social distancing, daily self-screening, work and or workplace modifications, and the procedure for promptly reporting COVID-19 symptoms. Employees who are unvaccinated by an approved exemption must strictly follow all stated expectations.

**APPROVED:** If approved, the requestor will be moved to the Reasonable Accommodation Review process. KCHA anticipates this stage to begin around mid-December. An approved exemptions does not guarantee that a reasonable accommodation can be made.

**WORK ACCOMMODATIONS FOR EXEMPTED EMPLOYEES:** Continued employment for exempted employees will be available until the reasonable accommodation process is complete.

**DENIED:** If denied, the requestor will be given until February 28, 2022 to comply with the vaccination requirements or will be placed on 30-days administrative leave on March 1, 2022 and separated from employment on March 31, 2022 in alignment with the vaccine requirement separation process. If staff have provided required documentation by February 28, 2022, staff will be permitted to continue working, following all masking and social distancing requirements, a possible alternative work arrangement and any other safety and health requirements until they reach full vaccinated status.

**EXEMPTION APPEAL:** An employee may file an appeal for a secondary review if their initial request is denied. Appeals must be requested within ten business days of the initial determination. If the exemption request is again denied, the employee may remain in the workplace with proper face covering and social distancing while they become fully vaccinated. Failure to provide proof of becoming vaccinated by February 28, 2022 will result in the employee being placed on paid administrative leave in alignment with vaccine requirement employment separation procedures.

**REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION:** Once the Reasonable Accommodation review process begins, KCHA will initiate an interactive dialogue with the supervisor/employee about the employee's functional capabilities, work requirements, interactions with residents and clients, and what if any reasonable accommodations may be appropriate to enable the employee to meet the business needs of the organization and perform the essential functions of the position. An assessment of the impact of the proposed accommodation on the overall financial resources, interactions with residents and clients, operations and workflow of the department and KCHA will be evaluated. If a reasonable accommodation is identified, the accommodation will be subject to continuous review and evaluation depending on guidance from public health officials. Reasonable accommodations may need to be changed or modified or eliminated as circumstances change. KCHA may not be able to reasonably accommodate all those who request and receive an exemption. Reasonable accommodations cannot be appealed.

For new hires after December 1, 2021, they must inform KCHA's Human Resources department as soon as possible if they intend to apply for an exemption. They will not be able to start employment until and unless an exemption is approved and a reasonable accommodation can be made.

### **III. Compliance**

Barring a qualifying medical or religious exemption, regular and long term temporary, benefit-eligible employees who have completed their introductory period who fail to provide the required documentation by February 28, 2022, will be placed on paid administrative leave for thirty (30) calendar days. KCHA will separate employment at the end of the thirty-day period. Employment separation will be non-disciplinary and affected employees will be deemed eligible for a competitive rehire if they 1) otherwise left in good standing and 2) provide proof they meet the vaccination requirement. The Human Resources department will notify separating employees of their outgoing benefit package and contact information. Interns, non-benefit, introductory period and temporary employees who have not qualified for an exemption, will be separated on March 1, 2022 without the paid administrative leave benefits.

#### **More Information**

See the [KCHA COVID-19 Vaccine Policy FAQs](#). KCHA staff should also regularly check their emails and hard copy postings for staff without regular access to email for follow-up communications about the implementation of the policy and requirements. The King County Housing Authority reserves the right to modify, add, or waive requirements as the COVID-19 situation changes.