



**U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs**

Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer

VA Central Office  
Washington, D.C.

October 4, 2021

## **OFFICE OF THE CHIEF HUMAN CAPITAL OFFICER (OCHCO) BULLETIN**

### **SUBJECT: Mandatory Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Vaccination Program for VA Employees**

This OCHCO Bulletin supplements the VA Handbook 5019 Notice published October 4, 2021, on the mandatory COVID-19 vaccination program for Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) employees. The VA Notice will be incorporated into VA Handbook 5019, Employee Occupational Health Service within twelve months of publication.

Executive (EO) 14043, "Requiring Coronavirus Disease 2019 Vaccination for Federal Employees," requires all VA employees to receive a complete COVID-19 vaccination series no later than November 8, 2021 or have an approved medical or religious accommodation no later than November 22, 2021, to comply with the EO 14043 requirement.

VA Handbook 5019 maintains the deadline set in [VHA Directive 1193](#), "Coronavirus Disease 2019 Vaccination Program for Veterans Health Administration Health Care Personnel," for all current VHA Health Care Personnel (HCP), as defined in Paragraph 3b of the policy, to be vaccinated against COVID-19 by October 8, 2021. This October 8, 2021 deadline is not extended to the November 22, 2021 deadline as prescribed by the EO. For employees hired after publication of the Directive, they must receive a full COVID-19 vaccine series within 8 weeks of beginning employment but be fully vaccinated no later than November 22, 2021. VHA HCP hired on or after November 22, 2021 must be fully vaccinated prior to beginning employment with VA.

#### **VA Policy.**

It is VA policy that all VA Administrations and Staff Offices will implement a mandatory COVID-19 vaccination program by requiring all employees, including VHA HCP, to receive a COVID-19 vaccination or obtain an exception for medical or religious reasons. Compliance with this policy is a requirement and employees in violation of this policy may face disciplinary action up to and including removal from Federal service.

To assist employees with meeting the established November 22, 2021, fully vaccinated date, below is a chart that provides timeline information clarifying when employees need to receive vaccination doses by<sup>1</sup>. Dates provided account for established waiting periods between first

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<sup>1</sup> In most cases, employees may receive up to four (4) hours to travel to the vaccination site, complete a vaccination dose and return to work. Employees receiving a two-dose vaccine may receive up to eight (8) hours to be vaccinated. Additional information can be found in OCHCO Bulletin, [Updated - Authorized Absence for Individuals and Family Members who Receive the COVID-19 Vaccine](#).

and second doses of the vaccine.

	Johnson & Johnson	Moderna	Pfizer-BioNTech
First Shot	Nov. 8, 2021	Oct. 11, 2021	Oct. 18, 2021
Second Shot	n/a	Nov. 8, 2021	Nov. 8, 2021
Fully Vaccinated	Nov. 22, 2021	Nov. 22, 2021	Nov. 22, 2021

Human Resources will notify prospective employees of the mandatory COVID-19 vaccination program in job opportunity announcements and tentative and final offer letters. New employees are required to be fully vaccinated prior to entering on duty, subject to such exceptions as required by law. New employees will be asked to provide proof they are fully vaccinated or will be advised to request a medical or religious exception after receipt of a tentative offer. If a new employee does not provide the required proof of vaccination status or request an exception, the new employee may not be extended a final offer of employment or onboarded.

Employees may be vaccinated through VHA Employee Occupational Health (EOH) and may schedule an appointment through a [VHA COVID-19 Vaccine Coordinator](#). Additionally, employees may choose to be vaccinated through a provider other than EOH and can search for a vaccination site at [www.vaccines.gov](http://www.vaccines.gov).

### **VA Light Electronic Action Framework (LEAF) System**

Employees will provide proof of vaccination status or request an exception using the VA LEAF system to show they are fully vaccinated. To be compliant with vaccination policy dates, employees must follow guidance provided below, as determined by their position.

VHA HCP: Must complete the vaccination series by October 8, 2021. To meet compliance requirements outlined in VA Handbook 5019 Notice, HCP must directly submit vaccination proof in LEAF or sign a release of information for VHA to release vaccination information to LEAF within 14 days of publication.

VHA HCP granted a medical or religious exception under VHA Directive 1193 procedures do not need to submit a second request for an exception.

All Other VA Employees: Must receive the second (or final) dose of a vaccination series no later than November 8, 2021 in order to be fully vaccinated by November 22, 2021. To meet compliance requirements outlined in VA Handbook 5019 Notice, employees must directly submit vaccination proof in LEAF or sign a release of information for VHA to release vaccination information to LEAF.

Employees requesting a medical or religious exception must submit their request in LEAF no later than October 18, 2021.

Employees unable to access [LEAF](#) may submit proof of vaccination status or request a medical or religious exception on VA Form 10-230. This form must be submitted to the employee's supervisor.

### **Proof of Vaccination Status**

Using the [LEAF](#) electronic system, employees are required to provide acceptable proof of vaccination status and certify under penalty of perjury that the documentation is true and correct, even if an employee has previously attested to their vaccination status or provided information under VHA Directive 1193. Employees who were vaccinated through EOH may sign a release of information via [LEAF](#) or VA Form 10-230 to allow EOH to provide appropriate proof of vaccination documentation. Veteran employees vaccinated through primary care or other providers may authorize release of vaccination information from Veteran patient medical records or provide a copy of the vaccination documentation from their own records.

Acceptable forms of documentation include a copy of:

- The signed record of immunization from a health care provider or pharmacy,
- The COVID-19 Vaccination Record Card (CDC Form MLS-319813\_r, published on September 3, 2020),
- Medical records documenting the vaccination,
- Immunization records from a public health or state immunization information system, or
- Any other official documentation containing the required information.

The documentation must include information on:

- Type of vaccine received,
- Date(s) of administration, and
- The name of the health care professional(s) or clinic site(s) administering the vaccine(s).

### **Request for Medical or Religious Exception**

If an employee is seeking an exception to being fully vaccinated for medical or religious reasons, they must complete the required information in [LEAF](#) or the VA Form 10-230 declaring an exception. Employees are strongly encouraged to submit requests for a medical or religious exemption no later than October 18, 2021.

Requests for exceptions will be routed to the employee's supervisor to initiate the applicable reasonable accommodation process. While a request for medical or religious exception is being reviewed, the employee will wear a face mask, physically distance, be subject to Government-wide travel restrictions, and comply with additional mitigation measures such as COVID-19 testing.

Questions regarding medical or religious exceptions should be directed to the employee's supervisor and reasonable accommodation coordinator. Additional information on medical exceptions can be found in [VA Handbook 5975.1](#), Processing Requests for Reasonable Accommodation from Employees and Applicants with Disabilities. Information on religious

exceptions can be found in [VA Directive 5975](#), Diversity and Inclusion.

### **Resources**

Employees with questions regarding COVID-19 vaccinations should review information on the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Vaccine page](#) and the [VHA COVID-19 Vaccine SharePoint](#).

Questions regarding the contents of this bulletin should be directed to the following resources:

- VHA Directive 1193 and VHA HCP – [vhawmchrcovid19@va.gov](mailto:vhawmchrcovid19@va.gov)
- Medical or Religious accommodations – Reasonable Accommodation Coordinator
- Disciplinary-Related questions – local Human Resources office
- LEAF electronic system – [LEAF@va.gov](mailto:LEAF@va.gov)
- COVID-19 Vaccines – [COVID-19 Resource Room](#)

Employees with questions not addressed by the above resources should contact their local HR office. HR offices with questions regarding this bulletin should contact the Worklife and Benefits Service at: [vaco058worklife@va.gov](mailto:vaco058worklife@va.gov).

**Issued by: VA OCHCO/Worklife and Benefits Service**