



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health and Human Services **MassHealth**
Office of Medicaid
Office of Long Term Services and Supports
One Ashburton Place, 5th Floor
Boston, Massachusetts 02108

CHARLES D. BAKER
Governor

KARYN E. POLITO
Lieutenant Governor

MARYLOU SUDDERS
Secretary

AMANDA CASSEL KRAFT
Acting Medicaid Director

Tel: (617) 573-1600
Fax: (617) 573-1891
www.mass.gov/eohhs

NOTICE: COVID-19 Booster Requirement for PCAs

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Dear MassHealth PCA,

All PCAs working in the MassHealth PCA Program were previously required to complete the full required regimen of COVID-19 vaccine doses by October 31, 2021, except for those PCAs who qualify for a limited exemption. **Now, PCAs working in the MassHealth PCA program must receive the COVID-19 booster vaccination by March 21, 2022, or no later than three weeks after they become eligible**, except for those PCAs who qualify for a limited exemption.

Background information:

On September 1, 2021, the Baker-Polito Administration announced a vaccine requirement for all rest homes, assisted living residences (ALRs), hospice programs, and to home care agency workers providing in-home, direct care services under a state contract or state program as part of a continued effort to protect older adults and more vulnerable populations against COVID-19. On September 8, 2021, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health promulgated 105 CMR 159.000: *COVID-19 Vaccinations for Certain Staff Providing Home Care Services in Massachusetts*, which requires certain home care workers to receive the COVID-19 vaccine.

All home care workers were required to complete the full regimen of COVID-19 vaccine doses by October 31, 2021. In addition, all eligible home care workers must receive an additional dose or booster vaccination by March 21, 2022.

Pursuant to an Order of the Commissioner of Massachusetts Department of Public Health ([DPH Order 2022-01](#)), issued on January 6, 2022, all eligible home care workers must receive a COVID-19 additional dose or booster vaccination by February 28, 2022, or as soon as possible after becoming eligible, and no later than three weeks from the date eligible. For purposes of the MassHealth PCA Program, all PCAs eligible on February 28, 2022, should receive the COVID-19 additional dose or booster vaccination as soon as possible, and no later than March 21, 2022, which is three weeks from the initial eligibility date.



PCAs who become eligible to receive a COVID-19 additional dose or booster vaccination on or after February 28, 2022, must receive the additional dose or booster vaccination as soon as possible after becoming eligible and no later than three weeks after they become eligible. All new PCAs must receive the additional dose or booster vaccination as soon as possible after becoming eligible and no later than three weeks after their hire date. This requirement does not apply to PCAs who qualify for a limited exemption. PCAs may be exempt from the full required regimen of vaccine doses and the additional does or booster vaccination if the following applies:

1. The vaccine is medically contraindicated, meaning that administration of a COVID-19 vaccine to that individual would likely be detrimental to the individual's health, and the individual can provide documentation demonstrating their need for this exemption, and the individual is able to perform their essential job functions with a reasonable accommodation that is not an undue burden on the employer, to avoid risk of contracting/transmitting COVID-19 on the job; or
2. The individual objects to vaccination on the basis of a sincerely held religious belief and the individual is able to perform their essential job functions with a reasonable accommodation that is not an undue burden on the employer, to avoid risk of contracting/transmitting COVID-19 on the job.

Any PCA who qualifies for an exemption based on medical contraindication or a sincerely held religious belief is exempt from the requirement to receive a COVID-19 additional dose or booster vaccination.

Please continue reading to learn more information about the vaccine requirement and what this means for you as an employer of PCAs under the MassHealth PCA program.

Please continue reading on reverse side →

When was the deadline for me to get a COVID-19 vaccine (not including the booster)?

All PCAs were previously required to complete the full required regimen of COVID-19 vaccine doses, or document that they qualify for an exemption, by October 31, 2021. After that date, all new PCAs must have completed the full required regimen by the time they are hired. Completing the full required regimen of COVID-19 vaccine doses means:

- Two doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine; or
- Two doses of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine; or
- One dose of the Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine.

When is the deadline for me to get a COVID-19 booster vaccination?

All PCAs are required to receive the COVID-19 booster vaccination by March 21, 2022, if they are eligible for the booster by February 28, 2022. PCAs who are not eligible for the COVID-19 booster vaccination by February 28, 2022, must receive the COVID-19 booster vaccination no later than three weeks after becoming eligible for the booster.

New PCAs who are hired after February 28, 2022, and are eligible for a COVID-19 booster vaccination at the date of hire, must receive the COVID-19 booster vaccination no later than three weeks after the date of hire.

New PCAs who are hired after February 28, 2022, but who are not yet eligible for a COVID-19 booster vaccination at the date of hire, must receive the COVID-19 booster vaccination no later than three weeks after becoming eligible.

To be eligible for the COVID-19 booster vaccination, PCAs must have received:

- The second dose of Pfizer-BioNTech at least five months prior; or
- The second dose of Moderna at least five months prior; or
- The single dose of J&J/Janssen at least two months prior.

How do PCAs qualify for an exemption?

PCAs can qualify for a limited exemption if:

1. The vaccine is medically contraindicated, meaning that administration of a COVID-19 vaccine to that individual would likely be detrimental to the individual's health, and the individual can provide documentation demonstrating their need for this exemption, and the individual is able to perform their essential job functions with a reasonable accommodation that is not an undue burden on the consumer-employer, to avoid risk of contracting/transmitting COVID-19 on the job; or
2. The individual objects to vaccination on the basis of a sincerely held religious belief and the individual is able to perform their essential job functions with a reasonable accommodation that is not an undue burden on the consumer-employer, to avoid risk of contracting/transmitting COVID-19 on the job.

PCAs who qualify for a limited exemption are not required to receive the primary COVID-19 vaccination or the COVID-19 booster vaccination.

Does the vaccine requirement change my Consumer-employer's rights and responsibilities?

No, this vaccine requirement does not change your Consumer's rights and responsibilities as your employer. **It is your PCA Consumer-employer's choice whether to hire, terminate, or decline services from their PCA(s) based on each employee's individual vaccination status.**

Can my Consumer-employer ask me about my vaccination or booster status?

Yes. In order to make the best decisions about their safety and personal care, your Consumer-employer may ask you to verify your vaccination status, including booster vaccination, and/or whether you qualify for an exemption.

As the employer, your Consumers can require you to complete the attached COVID-19 Vaccine Attestation Form, which has important information about the COVID-19 vaccine and your vaccination status.

For information regarding the vaccine requirement, please go to: www.mass.gov/info-details/massachusetts-law-about-vaccination-immunization.

Can my Consumer-employer ask for a copy of my vaccine card or medical information?

Your Consumer-employer may ask to *look at* your vaccine card or an applicable doctor's letter explaining why you cannot receive a vaccine. It is strongly recommended that Consumer-employers NOT keep copies of this information on file, but if a Consumer-employer chooses to do so, the Consumer-employer should ensure that any such documents are maintained in compliance with any applicable laws.

If your Consumer-employer wishes to keep a record of your vaccination status, they may have you complete the attached COVID-19 Vaccine Verification Form after viewing your verification documents.

What will happen if I refuse to get a vaccine or a booster vaccination?

COVID-19 vaccination, including a vaccination booster, is the most effective method for preventing infection and serious illness from the virus. As your employer, it is your Consumer's decision whether to hire, schedule, or terminate someone who has not received a vaccine. Under federal employment law, your Consumer-employer has a legal right to require you to receive a COVID-19 vaccine.

The Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) does not plan to monitor PCAs' COVID-19 vaccination statuses. Consumer-employers are responsible for monitoring their own employees' vaccination statuses.