

Joint Statement Supporting COVID-19 Vaccine Mandates for All Oral Health Care Workers

Sept. 1, 2021

On July 26, 2021, a coalition of 57 health organizations and societies issued a [joint statement](#) calling for all health care and long-term care employers to require their workers to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. They considered that requirement to be “the logical fulfillment of the ethical commitment of all health care workers to put patients as well as residents of long-term care facilities first and take all steps necessary to ensure their health and well-being.” The signatories of that statement included major organizations representing medicine, academic health centers, nursing, pharmacy, and public health, and noted that they stood “with the growing number of experts and institutions that support the requirement for universal vaccination of health workers.”^{1,2} To date, no national dental organizations have similarly called for mandatory vaccination of the oral health care workforce, including students in training.

Oral health is integral to overall health, and the primary obligation of oral health care professionals is to protect the health and well-being of patients and communities. Unfortunately, many oral health care workers remain unvaccinated.³ Because of highly contagious variants and significant numbers of unvaccinated people, COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations, and deaths are once again rising throughout the United States.⁴ As we move toward full FDA approval of available vaccines, all oral health care workers should get vaccinated for their own health and to protect their co-workers, families, and patients. This action is particularly critical to protect those who are most vulnerable, including unvaccinated children and the immunocompromised.

We call for all governmental executive, regulatory, and legislative entities to mandate that all oral health care workers, including oral health care students and residents, be vaccinated against COVID-19.

As dental public health professionals, we stand with the major health care and public health organizations that support required universal vaccination of health care workers. While we recognize that some oral health care workers cannot be vaccinated due to medical reasons and should be exempted from a mandate, they constitute a small minority of oral health care workers. Employers should consider any applicable state laws on a case-by-case basis. We must continue to address workers’ concerns, engage with marginalized populations, and work with trusted messengers to improve vaccine acceptance. The health and safety of U.S. workers, families, communities, and the nation depends on it.

SIGNATORIES (Listed Alphabetically)

American Association for Dental, Oral, and Craniofacial Research (AADOCR)
American Association of Public Health Dentistry (AAPHD)
American Board of Dental Public Health (ABDPH)
American Dental Education Association (ADEA)
American Dental Hygienists' Association (ADHA)
American Institute of Dental Public Health (AIDPH)
American Public Health Association (APHA)
Diverse Dental Society (DDS)
Hispanic Dental Association (HDA)
National Dental Association (NDA)
Oral Health Progress and Equity Network (OPEN)
Society of American Indian Dentists (SAID)

References

1. Weber D, Al-Tawfiq J, Babcock H, Bryant K., Drees M, Elshaboury R, et al. Multisociety statement on COVID-19 vaccination as a condition of employment for healthcare personnel. *Infect Control Hosp Epidemiol.* 2021 Jul 13;1-46. doi: 10.1017/ice.2021.322. Online ahead of print.
2. American Hospital Association. AHA Policy Statement on Mandatory COVID-19 Vaccination of Health Care Personnel. July 21, 2021. Available at: <https://www.aha.org/public-comments/2021-07-21-aha-policy-statement-mandatory-covid-19-vaccination-health-care>.
3. Versaci MB. Latest research finds 6.8% of dental hygienists have contracted COVID-19, 52% fully vaccinated. *ADA News* April 28, 2021. Available at: <https://www.ada.org/en/publications/ada-news/2021-archive/april/latest-research-finds-6-point-8-percent-of-dental-hygienists-have-contracted-covid-19#:~:text=52%25%20fully%20vaccinated-,Latest%20research%20finds%206.8%25%20of%20dental%20hygienists%20have%20contracted,%20D19%2C%2052%25%20fully%20vaccinated>.
4. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. COVID data tracker weekly review: interpretative data for August 13, 2021. Available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/covid-data/covidview/index.html>.