

Frequently Asked Questions

Answers to frequently asked questions you may receive from Caregivers.

About our new COVID-19 vaccination policy for Caregivers

Nov. 17, 2021

Q: Will the same policy apply for all Sparrow entities/affiliates?

A: Yes. The policy and process will be the same at all Sparrow sites.

Q: Why is Sparrow changing its policy and requiring the COVID vaccine?

A: The Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS) has released a rule requiring employers to create a policy mandating the COVID vaccine. This is a Condition of Participation (COP) for Medicare and Medicaid. We must comply with CMS COPs in order to be reimbursed for the care we provide and for Physicians Health Plan to maintain ability to offer Medicare Advantage plans.

Q: What do caregivers need to do to comply with this new policy?

A: There are two key dates for compliance:

- All those who provide services to Sparrow Health System must do one of the following by **Dec. 5, 2021**:
 - **Provide proof of receipt of at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine to SHS Employee Health.**
 - **Submit request for medical or religious exemption**
 - Exemption request forms are available on the Intranet under Employee Health Services, linked [here](#) and must be submitted to Exemptions@sparrow.org
- All those who provide services to Sparrow Health System must do one of the following by **Jan. 4, 2022**:
 - **Make sure you are on-record with Employee Health as fully vaccinated from COVID**
 - **Receive an approved medical or religious exemption for the COVID vaccine**

Q: Will this apply to our Medical Staff?

A: Yes. Just as the need to have flu vaccines has applied to all privileged medical staff members as well as allied health providers, the COVID vaccine policy requirements will apply as well. This is an eligibility requirement for membership in the medical staff at all hospitals and SMG.



This information is meant to assist leaders in communicating with their team.

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Q: Will this apply to volunteers?

A: Yes. Volunteers, agency contractors and students will fall under this policy.

Q: Are caregivers able to decline the COVID vaccination and submit to weekly testing?

A: No. The CMS rule does not allow for declinations and testing in lieu of a mandate. Vaccinations will be required for all caregivers unless they are approved for a medical or religious exemption.

Q: What about caregivers who have tested positive for COVID and have natural immunity?

A: The same vaccine requirement is applied to those who have previously tested positive for COVID or who have tested positive for antibodies.

Q: What about caregivers who work primarily remote? Are they exempt?

A: The same vaccine requirement is applied to all caregivers. CMS only allows for exemptions for people who never report on-site for work purposes. The vast majority of our Sparrow caregivers are required to come on site, even if irregularly.

Q: What happens if caregivers have not received at least one (1) dose of COVID vaccine and have not completed a request for exemption by Dec. 5, 2021?

A: Caregivers who are not on record with Employee Health as having received at least one dose of a COVID vaccine and have not requested a medical or religious exemption by Dec. 5, 2021, will not be permitted to work. This is contained within the CMS rule that Sparrow must comply with in order to meet the Conditions of Participation (COP) to bill Medicare or Medicaid for services rendered.

Q: What happens if caregivers are not fully vaccinated or have an approved exemption by Jan. 4, 2022?

A: Caregivers who are neither fully vaccinated nor approved for a COVID vaccine exemption by Jan. 4, 2022, will not be permitted to work. This is contained within the CMS rule that Sparrow must comply with in order to meet the Conditions of Participation (COP) to bill Medicare or Medicaid for services rendered.

Q: What is our current caregiver vaccination rate?

A: Sparrow's overall rate is about 71 percent, though the percentages widely vary within specific groups. The highest figures exist in our leadership, physician/APP and professional job groups, with rates of around 80 percent. The lowest rates are in our Community Hospital locations, which range from 45-68 percent, and union classifications, which range from 53-75 percent.



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Q: Is the third dose (booster) shot going to be mandatory for those already vaccinated?

A: No. At this time the third dose will not be mandatory, but we strongly encourage everyone to follow CDC/Infection Prevention recommendations and receive the COVID booster.



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