

HPH COVID-19 Pandemic Mandates

This message lays out job requirements for all employees of High Peaks Hospice regarding the COVID-19 pandemic. Currently 84% of our staff are fully vaccinated against COVID-19. The 16% not vaccinated are predominately field staff.

Weekly Testing: starting the week of September 6, 2021 and continuing until rescinded, all unvaccinated personnel must be tested for COVID-19 weekly. It is the employee's responsibility to seek out the test and ensure the results are submitted by Tuesday of each week. Failure to submit test results by Tuesday will result: first miss will be written up in personnel file as a last warning, second miss will be grounds for termination of employment. In addition, should the testing cost stop being covered by the state, it is the employee's responsibility to pay for the testing.

Reason for this mandate: not getting the vaccination shot(s) is a personal choice based on the individual. One consequence of this decision is the employee is vulnerable to more severe symptoms of the virus than vaccinated individuals. This increased vulnerability has the real potential of costing the organization in lost productivity.

Change of Work Hours: We are encountering more patients and their loved ones who request only fully vaccinated people enter their home. This is their choice and we honor their choice as much as we honor our people's choice to vaccinate or not. Currently, we have adequate means to serve those patients without exposing them to unvaccinated people. Should that balance cause a shortage of vaccinated staff, unvaccinated personnel will be placed on per Diem status, thus cutting their hours, so that we may seek out fully vaccinated people to serve our patients.

Starting in September, any employee who wishes their vaccination status to not be made public will be considered unvaccinated with regard to our patients' requests and this mandate. If you do not notify HPH Leadership of your wishes, we will consider your vaccination status public knowledge.

Reason for this mandate: our number one priority is serving those who deserve and need hospice care; we listen to their choices and respond as best we can. There could come a point at which a high enough percentage of our patients want only vaccinated people caring for them and we don't have the staff to accommodate this, and adding additional people costs money. The intention is to get the person back to full status as soon as possible.

Vaccination Required: regular After Hours nurses must all be fully vaccinated. This does not apply to day staff working on-call due to temporary need or emergencies.

Reason for this mandate: After Hours can be called to any home. The number of regular After Hours nurses does not allow for a visit to a home that requires vaccinated only unless all are vaccinated.

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Mask Wearing: well fitted mask wearing and social distancing are required by all personnel in every office. With proper social distancing, one-on-one meetings between two vaccinated people do not require masks. Masks that do not cover both the nose and mouth or are not snug to the face are not considered well fitted.

Reason for this mandate: mask wearing, social distancing and frequent hand washing have proven to be good deterrents to the spread of the COVID-19 virus, as well as other illnesses. With infection cases rising everywhere, it is important we all do what we can to protect each other as best as possible.

Daily COVID-19 Screening: the NYS DOH still requires us to have everyone sign-in to each office and take temperatures. This includes anyone who enters the office for any amount of time. Non-staff are required to wear masks at all times when in our office. Deliveries should be received in the vestibule to minimize possible exposure to our staff.

Reason for this mandate: DOH requirement.

The personal choices we make regarding this pandemic have consequences beyond just our own personal wellbeing. Whether we like or not, or even believe it or not, everyone of us could be a carrier/spreader of the virus at any time. While these mandates may seem extreme or unfair, they are designed to give everyone at High Peaks Hospice the best chance to survive and thrive, while also taking the best care of our patients and their loved ones as possible.

If you would like to discuss with me regarding these mandates, please contact me. I have spent an inordinate amount of time researching facts and figures, past pandemics and their outcomes, and various law perspectives and welcome the opportunity to share what I've learned.