COVID-19 Vaccine Mandate Frequently Asked Questions

On October 1, Governor Gavin Newsom announced a student vaccination mandate which would require COVID-19 vaccinations for both public and private California students and staff once the vaccine is fully authorized by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration for each respective age group. Due to the likely implementation date of July 1, 2022, we have time to understand the announcement and the eventual guidance. We will share further information with you as details emerge.

Below are some of the most frequently asked questions we have received regarding this proposed new vaccination requirement. Responses are based on a summary found in the Governor’s Press Release and information gathered from educational associations in the State. We will continue to keep you apprised of the latest developments as we receive more information from the California Department of Public Health.

1. **When does the mandate go into effect?**
   **Response:** According to the Governor’s announcement, the mandate could take effect July 1, 2022 for students in grades 9-12, as well as staff, for the 2022–23 school year. Should the COVID vaccine receive full FDA approval for youth ages 12–15 before January, then it is possible that this requirement will go into effect in January 2022.

2. **Who is involved in the decision-making process?**
   **Response:** We realize there are many in our community who are very concerned about this development and others that support the decision. As a district, we are obligated to implement and follow state Health and Safety Code requirements, laws and regulations, and the vaccination requirement, which falls under sections 120325 - 120380 of the California Health and Safety Code. Our school board, district administrators, principals, teachers and staff are **not** involved in this process or decision-making. The California Department of Public Health will initiate the rulemaking process and write regulations which will address details surrounding the requirements such as the process and scope of medical and personal exemptions. Public comments to the California Department of Public Health will be established in Sacramento. If you have opinions that you would like to share about this new regulation and/or provide input on the rulemaking process associated with this new mandate, please direct those to the California Department of Public Health: [https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Pages/contact_us.aspx](https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Pages/contact_us.aspx)

3. **Is the OUHSD currently mandating the COVID-19 Vaccine?**
   **Response:** No. The mandate for students to be vaccinated is **not in effect**. The mandate **cannot** go into effect until the vaccine has **full FDA approval** for specific age groups of students. The OUHSD will enact requirements based on the state's timelines, and not earlier.
4. **What is the OUHSD Board of Trustees’ position on the mandate?**
   **Response:** The OUHSD Board of Education will be considering a resolution regarding the mandate at its meeting on November 17, 2021. The resolution can be found here. Please note that should the board approve this resolution, this does not mean that the OUHSD will refuse to follow the mandate once it is enacted. As a district, we are obligated to implement and follow state Health and Safety Code requirements, laws and regulations, and vaccination requirements under sections 120325 - 120380 of the California Health and Safety Code. If approved, the resolution will be shared with California Assembly Member Gallagher, State Senator Nielsen, Governor Newsom, the Butte County Public Health Department, and the California Department of Public Health.

5. **When does this requirement take effect?**
   **Response:** The mandate has an anticipated date of July 1, 2022. The vaccine must first have full FDA approval. Once it has full FDA approval, it will go into effect at the start of the following semester.

6. **Will there be exemptions?**
   **Response:** Yes. **Requirements established by regulation, not legislation, must be subject to exemptions “for both medical reasons and personal beliefs.”** (HSC section 120338). This means, since the mandate is established by an executive order, medical, religious, and personal belief exemptions will be accepted. **Senate Bill 277 (SB) has a caveat that when a new vaccine is added to the list of the current requirements, there may be an exemption for personal beliefs.** (underline links to text in SB 277)

7. **Where can I download a COVID-19 vaccine exemption form and where do I submit it?**
   **Response:** Exemptions for student COVID-19 vaccines are not yet applicable because the proposed mandate has not yet taken effect. It’s anticipated these exemptions will include medical, religious, and personal. When appropriate and when we have more information on the effective date and details, the district will post an exemption form on our website with detailed instructions.

   Please do not submit exemption requests to schools or the district at this time. We will follow up with additional information regarding exemptions once more information is available from the CDPH.

8. **Will OUHSD continue to provide learning options next year for families who do not want to vaccinate their students?**
   **Response:** Yes. We will continue to offer the Independent Study program. **Click here for more information.**