



COVID-19 vaccine requirement extended across health care

PHO sets Oct. 26 as vaccine deadline for hospital and community health workers; exemptions likely for non-patient care sites

Provincial Health Officer Dr. Bonnie Henry announced Monday that the COVID-19 vaccine requirement for long-term care and assisted living workers will be extended to the rest of health care effective October 26.

Health care workers in a wide array of patient and client care settings including hospitals, outpatient clinics and community health services like home support and day programs will be required to be vaccinated as a condition of employment, according to Henry.

At sites with no patient or resident care services workers may be exempt from the vaccine requirement. The union has asked the Ministry of Health to provide more information on site-based exemptions.

In long-term care and assisted living, October 11 has been set as the date by which workers must have received two doses of the vaccine.

The union is seeking clarification on whether a similar two-dose requirement will be in place for other health care workers on October 26, but few details were provided about the implementation of the policy at the announcement.

For the last number of weeks the union has been pressing employers and government to clarify the consequences for unvaccinated workers who do not meet the vaccination deadlines. The union has asked whether leaves of absence, redeployment, or other arrangements short of dismissal would be available for unvaccinated workers.

COVID-19 vaccines have proven to be safe and effective in reducing infection or serious illness. The union strongly advises unvaccinated members who still have questions to seek out credible sources of information like their family physician or the BC Centre for Disease Control.

HEU supports a voluntary vaccination program for health care workers, an approach also supported by the PHO and the Ministry of Health until last month.

September 15, 2021