

COVID-19 Vaccination – FAQ for Employees

For use by: United Counseling Service Employees, Interns, Volunteers and Conditionally Offered Job Applicants. The term "employee" in this document is used broadly and interchangeably with those others covered.

Key timelines to remember

- **Upon Accepted Conditional Job Offer -**

On or before job start, new employees must provide Human Resources with documentation of vaccine status with a scanned copy of your most current COVID-19 vaccination card (or a medical equivalent issued by the Department of Health or your medical practitioner.) If your card is lost or missing, UCS will treat your status as unvaccinated until evidence is provided. ***All Head Start and Early Head Start employees must disclose vaccine status and show evidence of full vaccination status prior to start. The agency may consider starting those who are partially vaccinated on a case-by-case basis.***

- **Within One Week PRIOR to Anticipated Start Date -**

Exemption Requests: Although the agency strives for maximum workplace safety through vaccination, we recognize the right to an accommodation process. The deadline for any conditionally offered new employee to submit a signed, completed request for accommodation as an exemption to the Policy, is ONE WEEK prior to job start. This is done by both requesting and submitting the applicable form ([Medical Exemption Request Form](#) or [Religious Exemption Request Form](#)) to the UCS Director of Human Resources at LAddison@ucsvt.org. See additional FAQ's on requesting an exemption.

- **Within One Week following Start Date -**

New employees who are unvaccinated (or treated as such due to unverified status) must show evidence of initial vaccination. Employees who receive the Johnson & Johnson/Janssen vaccination within one week of hire, fulfill the primary vaccine requirement with the single dose.

- **As soon as practicable but no later than Eight (8) Weeks of Hire -**

Evidence of final vaccination in the 2-dose series must be provided to HR.

- **Within two (2) Months or five (5) Months of Vaccine Series (or as applicable) -**

Evidence of booster vaccination must be provided to HR, in accordance with CDC guidance based on the type and timing of vaccine received. Booster timeline shall follow CDC guidance, which may or may not be reflected in updated Policy language given the evolving nature of those recommendations. Employees are expected to follow that which is published by the CDC and/or their medical practitioner's guidance in this regard.

Frequently Asked Questions

The following frequently asked questions are specifically answered for UCS employees. This document does not replace nor alter the UCS COVID-19 Vaccination Policy, but rather is a way to answer common questions.

- **Who is required to be vaccinated for COVID-19?**

The COVID-19 vaccination is required for all employees (including remote employees) at all UCS locations, as well as for other individuals such as interns and volunteers who physically access a UCS facility or premise.

- **Why is UCS requiring the COVID-19 vaccine as a condition of employment?**

When the COVID-19 vaccinations became available for use in late 2020, UCS encouraged all our employees to be vaccinated, but we did not, at that time, require vaccination as a condition of employment. While the great majority of our employees have been vaccinated, approximately 20% of our colleagues remained unvaccinated. As a healthcare provider, we made the decision to make the COVID-19 vaccination a requirement for our employees to protect the health and well-being of our clients, their families, our communities, and each other within our workplace.

- **What is the deadline for providing documentation of vaccination for the COVID-19 vaccine?**

All Employees provided proof that they have received both doses of the Moderna or Pfizer vaccine or one dose of the J&J/Janssen vaccine by Nov. 1, 2021, unless exempted by way of reasonable accommodation. New employees follow the timelines indicated in the Policy and as outlined above.

- **If I received the COVID-19 vaccine from a state-run site, or at my own provider's office or at a pharmacy, including Genoa, do I need to provide proof of vaccination?**

Yes. Wherever you received the COVID-19 vaccine, you need to provide your proof of vaccination directly.

- **How do I submit documentation of vaccination?**

You may submit documentation of vaccination by submitting an image of your COVID-19 Vaccination Record Card to Human Resources (in care of LAddison@ucsvt.org) using one of the methods below:

- Take a photo of your vaccination record card and email to LAddison@ucsvt.org
- Scan your vaccination record card and email to LAddison@ucsvt.org
- Secure Fax to Human Resources: 802-375-2381

- **How can I get the vaccine or the booster now, as an employee of UCS?**

COVID-19 vaccines are provided daily at multiple locations throughout Bennington County. Visit either:

- VT Department of Health at www.healthvermont.gov/covid-19 or <https://www.healthvermont.gov/covid-19/vaccine/getting-covid-19-vaccine>
- SVMC at <https://svhealthcare.org/COVID-19/Vaccine>
- You may also visit www.vaccines.gov to find a location near you to make an appointment.

- **How do I request a medical or religious exemption?**

Although the agency strives for maximum workplace safety through vaccination, we recognize the right to an accommodation process. Employees wishing to request a medical or religious exemption may do so by contacting the Director of Human Resources and requesting either the Medical or Religious Exemption

Request Form. *Exemption requests of conditionally offered successful applicants must follow the timeline noted above.* Any related exemption requests by existing employees should be submitted as soon as the need is identified. Without an approved accommodation, the Policy timelines apply. Please note that UCS is not required to approve any exemption request if doing so would cause an undue hardship on the agency.

- **Are remote workers required to provide proof of vaccination even though they might physically work at a UCS facility on an infrequent basis?**

Yes, all UCS employees are required to meet the vaccination requirement regardless of their on-site or remote work schedule.

- **If I am discharged or resign due to non-compliance with the UCS COVID-19 Vaccination Policy, will I be eligible for rehire?**

Termination for failure to comply with any aspect of this policy alone will not disqualify an employee from being hired in the future. All employees must comply with conditions of employment upon rehire, which includes, as part of the employment screening processes, requirements under the UCS COVID-19 Vaccination Policy.

- **What if I have questions or concerns about the vaccine requirement? Who should I talk to?**

We encourage employees who may have concerns or questions about COVID-19 vaccinations to speak to the UCS Employee Health office, the UCS Medical Director or their designee. Employees may also reach out to the Director of Human Resources with specific questions related to the vaccination policy and work eligibility. For individual medical related questions, employees are encouraged to talk with their healthcare provider or the UCS Medical Director.

- **If I elect to not receive the initial vaccination or vaccination series in the required timeline(s), and I am not approved for an exemption by the Agency, will I be terminated from employment? Will this be considered an involuntary separation?**

Employees who do not provide UCS with proof that they are vaccinated within the Policy timelines as explained above, and/or you have not obtained approval for a religious or medical exemption within the timelines required for the initial vaccine or vaccination series, will be placed on unpaid leave until their status is determined by the agency. Determination of status would be expected to follow shortly thereafter, with the employee's likely separation of employment recorded as an involuntary separation for non-compliance. Employees will have limited opportunity, if any, to seek reconsideration during this brief period, and granted at the agency's sole discretion. This FAQ is considered by the Agency as its notice period, should separation of employment become applicable.

- **If I elect to not receive the booster vaccination as noted in the policy and as guided by CDC recommendations, and I am not approved for an exemption by the Agency, will I be terminated from employment? Will this be considered an involuntary separation?**

Employees who do not provide UCS with proof that they have received the booster vaccinated within the Policy timelines and/or CDC guidelines as explained in "key timelines" above, and/or you have not obtained approval for a religious or medical exemption, will risk being placed on unpaid leave until their status is determined by the agency. The agency will issue individual warnings of personnel action related to the booster, as applicable, so that employees will have full understanding of their timelines and consequences for failure to act. Compliance with the agency's COVID-19 Vaccination Policy, inclusive of a booster requirement, is a condition of employment. Separations due to non-compliance with agency policy recorded as an

involuntary separation.

- **If I am involuntarily terminated for failure to comply with the UCS COVID-19 Vaccination Policy, will I be eligible for unemployment benefits?**

Employees whose employment ends because of choosing not to comply with the UCS COVID-19 Vaccination Policy may apply for unemployment benefits. The state unemployment office determines eligibility to receive unemployment benefits.

- **General questions about the vaccine**

Can I choose which vaccine I receive?

Where you obtain your COVID-19 vaccine and which manufacturer you choose to receive is up to you.

Can employees receive the COVID-19 vaccine if they are pregnant or plan to become pregnant in the next three months?

Please reference [The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists \(ACOG\) Practice Advisory for Pregnant and Lactating Patients](#) and talk to your healthcare provider.

Can I receive the COVID-19 vaccine if I have had a severe allergic reaction to another vaccine?

We recommend that individuals with a history of anaphylaxis (severe, potentially life-threatening allergic reaction) consult their health care provider on making the decision as to whether or not to be vaccinated. See also:

- [Moderna Vaccine fact sheet and information for recipients and healthcare professionals](#)
- [Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine fact sheet and information for recipients and healthcare professionals](#)
- [J&J/Janssen vaccine fact sheets for recipients and healthcare professionals](#)

- **Receiving the vaccine**

If my appointment is scheduled during the workday, am I required to clock out or to take earned time to get the vaccination?

No. Upon timely request, employees who receive their vaccination during working hours will be provided with reasonable time within their day to do so. If you are unable to be released during regular working hours due to work related demands, hourly, non-exempt employees will be allowed up to two hours of “Misc.” paid non-work time added to your timecard.

As an employee or staff member will I have to pay for the vaccine or will insurance cover the vaccine?

No, currently there is no charge to any employee receiving the COVID-19 vaccination. You may need to provide your insurance information to the vaccine administration site.

Can I schedule my appointment during the workday?

As noted above, you may schedule the appointment for your COVID-19 vaccination whenever it is convenient for you and your program, and within the vaccination provider’s appointment hours. It is important that you arrange with your manager or supervisor for any needed coverage while you are at your appointment.

How long will the vaccine appointment take?

The duration of time may vary based on provider, so please schedule an appointment ahead of time when possible or attend when/where walk-ins appointments are readily available.

If I don't feel well or have an adverse reaction after receiving my COVID-19 vaccination, how will days off be handled?

If you believe you may be experiencing an adverse reaction to the vaccine, and you have exhausted your unused, accrued leave benefits, or you do not earn leave time, you will be provided with reasonable paid leave time, not to exceed 8 hours to recover from vaccination side-effects. Please consult with your medical practitioner, the Medical Director, or your supervisor if you are unsure of your ability to work.

Does the second dose of the vaccine have to be the same vaccine I was initially given?

It is recommended that the second dose be from the same manufacturer as your first dose.

Does the booster have to be the same vaccine I was initially given? How do I know when my booster is due?

The CDC reports that the Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna (mRNA COVID-19 vaccines) are preferred in most situations. See the CDC guidance on type and timing of booster vaccines at this web site: [COVID-19 Vaccine Booster Shots | CDC](https://www.cdc.gov/covid-19/vaccine-boosters.html) Employees are responsible to carry out obtaining the booster vaccine within the timeframe applicable to their initial vaccine series and CDC guidelines. Receiving a booster vaccine is required under the UCS COVID-19 Vaccination Policy, unless exempted by way of approved reasonable accommodation.

Will employees be tested, or required to quarantine, if they develop fever and/or flu like symptoms after receiving the vaccine?

Yes. It typically takes a few weeks for the body to build immunity after vaccination. That means it's possible to be infected with the virus just before or just after receiving a vaccination and become ill if the vaccine has not had enough time to provide protection.

- **General questions about COVID-19 Testing**

If I am required to have proactive surveillance testing because of my position or my vaccine status, how is time and travel handled?

If the agency requires you to be tested at available testing locations as a precautionary measure for surveillance purposes, the Agency will provide you with pay for the time and travel necessary for such testing, at a location most reasonably accessible to you, including any travel costs, such as mileage reimbursement, pending receipt of your Expense/Mileage Reimbursement form. Scheduling the time necessary should be coordinated with your supervisor.

For your convenience and depending on regulatory guidance, UCS may provide you with a Rapid Antigen Tests, as an approved provider, through the UCS Employee Health office. Employees who are not fully vaccinated who are required to have surveillance testing as a result, will generally be required to obtain the PCR test for COVID-19.

Do I have to pay for testing?

No. Currently, the state of Vermont has provisions to ensure that testing continues to be free of charge for PCR test at a Heath Department testing site. You may still need to provide medical insurance information if you are a medically insured individual. Should the government sponsored testing end, the agency would be responsible for costs associated with testing as required by UCS. Instructions will be provided to you at that time. Depending on circumstances and testing needed, the agency may provide you with a testing kit and/or

may reimburse you for out-of-pocket expenses for testing administration after your insurance coverage ends.

How do I schedule my test and where can I get additional information?

Please see the Vermont Health Department COVID-19 “Testing” website at: [Testing | Vermont Department of Health \(healthvermont.gov\)](#) or contact Rachel Olmstead-Miri, Employee Health Nurse at 802-442-5491 ext. 275 or ROlmsteadMiri@ucsvt.org