

## Head Start of Lane County

### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS REGARDING COVID-19 AND COVID-19 VACCINES

Head Start of Lane County (“Head Start”) is dedicated to returning, to the extent possible, to lively and dynamic work sites where all Head Start community members can flourish. Head Start is also committed to advancing the health of Head Start community members, promoting the safety of our in-person learning environment, and contributing to the decline of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic.

Like the Oregon Health Authority (OHA), Head Start’s priority is to implement the protocols needed to reliably hold pre-school in-person, every pre-school day, for all students, all year long. The Delta variant of COVID-19 has driven the highest hospitalization rates Oregon has seen throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Currently, vaccines are only available to those 12 and older. As a result, the students Head Start serves are not vaccinated.

Head Start is following federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and guidance related to the COVID-19 pandemic closely, including executive orders and announcements issued by Oregon Governor Kate Brown, OHA guidance and regulations, the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) guidance, and the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance related to the new evidence on the highly contagious B.1.617.2 (Delta) variant of COVID-19.

Below you will find answers to common questions regarding COVID-19, COVID-19 vaccines, and face coverings, and Head Start’s response. Questions and answers will be updated based on federal, state, and local laws, ordinances, regulations, and guidance, so check back often for more information.

This FAQ represents key topics and **are answered from a Head Start perspective.**

Check Head Start’s COVID-19 policies for more specific information.

### **COVID-19 GENERALLY**

#### **What do we know about the B.1.617.2 (Delta) variant?**

New information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):

- The Delta variant, which is a mutation of SARS-CoV-2, has become the dominant strain in Oregon—estimated to account for 80-90 percent of recent COVID-19 cases.
- Recent COVID-19 cases have been found to be much as three times more transmissible than earlier COVID-19 variants.
- The Delta variant is causing some “breakthrough infections,” meaning infections in fully vaccinated people. However, data also indicates that breakthrough infections in fully vaccinated people are milder.
- Vaccination remains the most important tool in reducing the spread of COVID-19. If you are vaccinated, your risk of infection is around 3.5 times lower, your risk of getting ill from COVID is over 8 times lower, and your risk of hospitalization or death is around 25 times lower.
- Data continues to demonstrate that the vaccines currently in use are effective against the Delta variant and are preventing severe illness, hospitalization and death. While no

- vaccine is 100 percent effective, vaccination is the best way to protect you, your family and your community.
- Indoor masking is a simple way to help reduce the spread of the Delta variant.

### **Where can I find the most recent CDC Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools?**

You can find that guidance here:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k-12-guidance.html>.

### **How can I best reduce my risk of being exposed to or spreading COVID-19?**

The virus is thought to spread mainly from person to person, and the best way to reduce your risk is to avoid being exposed to the virus. Steps you can take to reduce your risk of exposure include:

- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
  - Remember that some people without symptoms can still spread the virus.
- Stay at home when you are sick.
- Use a face covering when indoors and when physical distancing is difficult or when going into closed spaces.
  - Physical distancing should be at least six feet. *See OAR 333-019-1015.*
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.
- Monitor your daily health for symptoms, such as your temperature.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue. Throw the tissue afterward and wash your hands.
- Perform hand hygiene with soap and water or use alcohol-based hand rub.
  - Hand Rub should contain at least 60% alcohol.
  - Hand washing should be done for at least 40-60 seconds based on the World Health Organization's (WHO) recommendations.

Visit the CDC's [COVID-19 Overview and Infection Prevention and Control Priorities in non-US Healthcare Settings page](#) and the [Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools](#) to learn more about protecting yourself from respiratory illnesses, like COVID-19.

## **COVID-19 VACCINES**

### **Can Head Start require employees to be vaccinated against COVID-19?**

Yes, generally, an employer can require its employees to be vaccinated against COVID-19, subject to disability discrimination and religious belief laws. For more information, visit the current Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries (BOLI) [guidance](#).

### **Can Head Start terminate an employee based on the employee's failure to vaccinate?**

Generally, yes, subject to reasonable accommodations and the lack of alternatives, or if granting an exception would create an "undue hardship" on Head Start or a "direct threat" to the safety of the employee or others. Head Start will engage with the employee to determine if a reasonable accommodation—including without limitation weekly testing, a fitted n95 mask, additional

distancing, a face mask with a face shield, a remote workspace, or other steps (including, depending on the circumstances, unpaid leave)—is possible.

**During the recruiting/screening/interview process, can Head Start ask a job applicant if they are vaccinated?**

Generally, yes and Head Start can also request proof of vaccination. Job applicants and employees should review job descriptions carefully to determine whether a position includes a requirement for vaccination. In response to vaccination questions, job candidates should not provide any medical or religious belief information.

Please note that after consulting with Head Start’s Health and Safety Consultant and reviewing recent federal, state, and local guidance, Head Start has determined that all/most job positions at Head Start require in-person work and, therefore, require employees to be fully vaccinated. Head Start will be updating and publishing its new job descriptions shortly.

**Will Head Start be providing any accommodations to the COVID-19 vaccine mandate based on a sincerely held religious belief, practice, or observance?**

Yes, once an employee informs Head Start of a sincerely held religious belief, practice or observance, Head Start will engage in an interactive dialogue to determine if an accommodation may be provided. Those requests are currently being handled by Sally Pope, Benefit Specialist, so if an employee makes a disclosure to a manager, the manager will advise the employee that there is a process available for considering exemptions and refer them to Ms. Pope.

The disclosure and any information volunteered will be kept strictly confidential and not disclosed to anyone, except that it will be shared with Human Resources (HR) to assist with the process for evaluating a request for an exception. Employees can access the OHA approved COVID-19 Vaccine Religious Exception Request Form at the following link.

For more information, please review Head Start’s COVID-19 Vaccine Policy.

**Will Head Start be providing any accommodations to the COVID-19 vaccine mandate based on a medical condition or allergy to the COVID-19 vaccines?**

Yes, the employee will be directed to the process to request an exemption from the vaccine mandate, and HR will be notified. The disclosure and any information volunteered will be kept strictly confidential and not disclosed to anyone, except that it will be shared with HR to assist with the process for evaluating a request for an exception. Employees can access the OHA approved COVID-19 Vaccine Medical Exception Request Form at the following link.

Employees are encouraged to read about the available COVID-19 vaccines to determine potential allergies. To learn about the different COVID-19 vaccines, please visit: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/different-vaccines.html>.

For more information, please review Head Start’s COVID-19 Vaccine Policy.

**What if I do not want to get a vaccine until one has been formally approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)?**

Head Start encourages employees not to wait. However, if an employee decides to request an exemption until the FDA has formally approve a vaccine, you may update your vaccination status at any time.

For more information, please review Head Start's COVID-19 Vaccine Policy.

### **What if I choose not to be vaccinated and am not eligible for an exception?**

Per OHA rule, OAR 333-019-1030, after October 18, 2021, Head Start employees and volunteers may not teach, work, provide care, learn, study, assist, observe, or volunteer for Head Start unless they are fully vaccinated or have provided documentation of a medical or religious exception. Head Start may not employ, contract with, or accept the volunteer services of staff or volunteers who are teaching, working, providing care, learning, studying, assisting, observing, or volunteering at Head Start unless the employees or volunteers are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 or have a documented medical or religious exception.

Employees and volunteers who are not fully vaccinated and who have not been granted an exemption by the deadlines above may be subject to disciplinary and/or corrective action, up to and including possible dismissal from employment. Employees and volunteers who are found to have falsified information related to their COVID-19 vaccination status or eligibility for an exemption may be subject to disciplinary and/or corrective action, up to and including possible dismissal from employment.

For more information, please review Head Start's COVID-19 Vaccine Policy.

### **What does it mean to be “fully vaccinated?”**

In general, people are considered fully vaccinated:

- Two weeks after their second dose in a two-dose series, such as the Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna vaccine, or
- Two weeks after a single-dose vaccine, such as Johnson & Johnson's Janssen vaccine.

If a person does not meet these requirements, regardless of the person's age, the person is NOT fully vaccinated.

For more information, please review Head Start's COVID-19 Vaccine Policy.

### **What is the deadline for compliance with Head Start's COVID-19 Vaccine Policy?**

No later than September 3, 2021, employees and volunteers must provide proof of vaccination to **Sally Pope, Benefits Specialists in the Human Resources Department**.

“Proof of vaccination” means documentation provided by a tribal, federal, state, or local government, or a health care provider, that includes an individual's name, date of birth, type of COVID-19 vaccination given, date or dates given, depending on whether it is a one-dose or two-dose vaccine, and the name/location of the health care provider or site where the vaccine was administered. Documentation may include but is not limited to a COVID-19 vaccination record card or a copy or digital picture of the vaccination record card, or a printout from the OHA's immunization registry.

For more information, please review Head Start's COVID-19 Vaccine Policy.

### **Which Head Start staff must be fully vaccinated against COVID-19?**

Head Start's COVID-19 vaccination requirement applies to all employees working at the Head Start center, including full-time and part-time teachers, substitute teachers, administrative staff, temporary staff, and drivers, as well as volunteers.

For more information, please review Head Start's COVID-19 Vaccine Policy.

### **What if I lose my vaccine card?**

*Tip: Take a picture of your card after receiving your first dose. This way, if it is misplaced or lost, you can use it when you arrive to the clinic to receive your second dose.*

Head Start cannot process a request for a replacement vaccine card. To replace a lost card, submit an [Adult Record Request](#) through the [Oregon Health Authority](#).

If you received your vaccination out of state, the CDC recommends contacting your state health department's immunization information system; your info should be added to that registry when you get vaccinated.

### **How did Head Start reach the decision to require COVID-19 vaccinations?**

Head Start leadership consulted with Head Start's Health and Safety Consultant, Oregon School Employees Association leaders, the Executive Board and Policy Council along with other Health and Medical stakeholders, and reviewed federal, state, and local guidance and materials before making this decision. It is based on scientific data that shows the COVID-19 vaccine effectively eliminates death or serious illness in nearly all COVID-19 infections.

Requiring vaccines, combined with other prevention measures, will help Head Start reach the highest level of protection possible, reduce infections, limit many of the disruptions of COVID-19, and safeguard the community. It will also allow students and staff to return to the in-person and on-center experience that is the cornerstone of academic success and student experience.

Moreover, as [recently stated](#) by the Oregon Department of Education, "Oregon is placing a priority on ensuring that every student is able to attend school in-person for the entire school year. Students are required to attend school, which is a congregate setting where COVID-19 can spread easily if precautions are not taken."

### **Why is it important for everyone over the age of 12 to be vaccinated?**

The vaccine allows your body's immune system to develop an antibody response that may protect you from getting sick, or developing a severe illness if you do contract COVID-19. Clinical trials have shown the COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective, and an important step in stopping the pandemic.

### **If I have previously been diagnosed with COVID-19, do I still need to be fully vaccinated to return to in-person work?**

Yes. For more information, please review Head Start's COVID-19 Vaccine Policy.

**Do I need to still to wear a face covering if I have been fully vaccinated?**

Yes, per OHA guidance, schools that grant medical or religious exceptions must take “reasonable steps to ensure that unvaccinated teachers, school staff and volunteers are protected from contracting and spreading COVID-19.” Reasonable steps may include without limitation weekly testing, a fitted n95 mask, additional distancing, and a facemask with a face shield, a remote workspace, or other steps. In some circumstances, “reasonable steps” may also include unpaid leave.

See Head Start’s Vaccine and Face Covering Policies for the most up-to-date information regarding Head Start’s vaccine requirements and face covering requirements for fully vaccinated individuals.

**Will Head Start be honoring COVID-19 vaccines other than the three COVID-19 vaccines authorized and recommended by the United States?**

Head Start will work to assist our community members experiencing barriers to receiving vaccinations. Employees who have received a vaccine not approved for use in the United States (e.g., AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine or Novavax COVID-19 vaccine) should contact Val Haynes, Health and Safety Consultant, for consultation before taking any action to attempt to comply with Head Start’s COVID-19 Vaccine Policy.

For more information, please review Head Start’s COVID-19 Vaccine Policy.

**I have completed an exemption for my other immunizations. Do I need to complete a COVID-19 vaccination exemption as well?**

Yes. You will be required to complete a separate declaration for the COVID-19 vaccine.

For more information, please review Head Start’s COVID-19 Vaccine Policy.

**Does it matter which COVID-19 vaccine I get?**

No. It is advised to get whichever brand of vaccine is available. You must complete both doses if you get Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna vaccine. The Johnson & Johnson/Janssen vaccine only requires one dose.

**I don’t have insurance. Will I be able to be vaccinated?**

At this time, there is no cost to receive the COVID-19 vaccine, and no verification of insurance is required.

**I am pregnant or breastfeeding. Is it safe to get the Covid-19 vaccine?**

The CDC recommends that pregnant or lactating people be vaccinated and has concluded that they can receive any of the COVID-19 vaccines. Please see the [CDC guidance](#) for details.

**Are children who attend Head Start fully vaccinated?**

The children Head Start serves are not vaccinated and many do not wear masks, per federal and state guidance. According to the OHA and CDC, “currently children under the age of 12 are not eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccines authorized for emergency use.” OAR 333-019-1015(1). We also work with medically sensitive children, so we need to be cautious in our steps to reopening.

**I have received one of the COVID-19 vaccines and am fully vaccinated. Will I still be required to be tested weekly at Head Start?**

At this time, we anticipate that fully vaccinated employees who have provided proof of vaccination will not be required to undergo asymptomatic testing regularly.

For more information, please review Head Start’s COVID-19 Vaccine Policy.

**Who bears the cost of testing for unvaccinated employees?**

Generally, Head Start will pay for both the testing of unvaccinated employees (to the extent not covered by health insurance) and the time spent getting tested for Fair Labor Standards Act non-exempt employees. This presumes that the only unvaccinated employees will be those "unable" to be vaccinated because of a sincerely held religious belief, practice, or observance or legitimate American with Disabilities Act (ADA)/medical reason.

*Please note that federal law requires insurers to fully cover the tests when ordered by a health care provider, but routine workplace tests are exempt from that provision.*

If vaccination is part of the job requirement, then an unvaccinated employee without a medical or religious belief accommodation bears the cost associated with a COVID-19 testing program.

**Where can I get a COVID-19 vaccine?**

Vaccines are located at multiple sites across Oregon.

- [CDC vaccine finder](#)
- [State of Oregon Vaccine Finder](#)
- [Lane County website](#)

**Does Head Start COVID-19 vaccination requirement violate HIPAA laws?**

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, or HIPAA, is a law that prevents health care professionals from sharing private health information without the patient’s permission. Generally, the law pertains to a health-care setting. It does not prohibit Head Start, or other institutions or businesses, from setting a policy that requires people to disclose their own vaccination status.

**If an employee is required to quarantine, is that time off paid by Head Start?**

Employees that are exposed to COVID-19 at their workplace will be eligible to use Agency Closed paid leave. If an employee is exposed to COVID-19 outside of the workplace or is caring for a family member affected by COVID-19, they will be required to use their own available sick

time. If no paid leave is available, employees will need to follow the Agency’s unpaid leave request process.

**What should I do if I experience a racist or other discriminatory reaction because of fear about COVID-19?**

Head Start takes matters of bias and retaliation very seriously. We strive to be an inclusive and caring community, and Head Start does not tolerate xenophobia, racism, or prohibited discrimination. In addition, Head Start prohibits retaliation against any employee, student, or volunteer for filing a good-faith complaint regarding conduct in violation of this policy. Head Start will not tolerate retaliation for raising a good-faith concern, for providing information related to a concern, or for otherwise cooperating in good faith in an investigation of a reported violation of this policy. Any employee who retaliates against anyone involved in an investigation is subject to disciplinary and/or corrective action, up to and including termination.

If you have experienced a negative interaction as a result of fear about COVID-19 or retaliation, you are encouraged to report that to your supervisor or HR. It is very important that Head Start is made aware of bias incidents. The COVID-19 situation requires caring and support for each other, and is not the time to be fearful of our fellow community members. This is the time to support each other.

**Am I completely immune from COVID-19 after I receive both doses of the vaccine?**

No. Treat this vaccine like any other. You are never completely immune, but studies show that with COVID-19 vaccines, you have a significantly higher chance of fighting targeted viruses that attempt to enter your body two weeks after your second – or final – dose.

**Where can I get more information about the COVID-19 vaccines?**

The CDC has published important information regarding the recommended vaccines. Find more [facts about COVID-19 vaccines](#).

**FACIAL COVERINGS/MASKS**

**Where are face coverings required?**

Effective immediately, employees—including without limitation teachers, substitute teachers, administrative staff, temporary staff, and drivers—students, and volunteers, including those “fully vaccinated,” are required to wear a face covering or mask when in an indoor setting:

- At the Head Start center during regular pre-school program hours;
- Engaged in educational activities, such as field trips or off-campus classes during regular pre-school program hours;
- At the Head Start center engaged in educational activities outside of regular pre-school program hours; and
- Engaged in transporting staff, students, volunteers, or visitors—whether driving or as a passenger.

For more information, please review Head Start’s Face Covering Policy.

**Are there situations where an individual is not required to wear a face covering indoors?**

Yes, for more information, please review Head Start’s Face Covering Policy.

**Am I required to wear a face covering when I am outdoors?**

Effective immediately, all employees—including without limitation teachers, substitute teachers, administrative staff, temporary staff, and drivers—students, and volunteers, including those “fully vaccinated,” are required to wear a face covering or mask when in an outdoor setting:

- At the Head Start center during regular pre-school program hours;
- Off the Head Start center during regular pre-school program hours engaged in educational activities;
- Engaged in educational activities, such as field trips or off-campus classes during regular pre-school program hours; and
- At the Head Start center engaged in educational activities outside of regular pre-school program hours.

Please note that in addition to wearing a mask, people may choose to wear a face covering, a face shield, and other protective safeguards for a number of reasons, including personal comfort level or if they or someone in their household is immunocompromised. All Head Start employees are expected to be supportive of their co-workers’ choices and Head Start employees should refrain from speculating about an individual’s vaccination status based on what type of mask an individual is wearing or other health and safety measures the individual is engaging in.

For more information, please review Head Start’s Face Covering