



COVID-19 VACCINATION POLICY

Blue Skies of Texas

Title	COVID-19 Vaccination Policy			
Department(s):	Human Resources and Compliance; BST Health Services	Date: 07.08.2021	Created: July 8, 2020 Kathie Estrada Updated: August 13, 2021 – clarified waiver option for new employees. Changed requirement for first dose for new employees to 15 from 14 to be consistent with 60 days total in which to comply	Page #1 of 11

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this policy is to minimize exposure to and transmission of the COVID-19 virus in the Blue Skies of Texas (BST) workplace by providing occupational protection to employees and preventing exposure to members of the vulnerable community we serve. To date, three COVID-19 vaccines have been provided “emergency use authorization” by the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and have been found to be highly effective in reducing the risk of contracting and spreading the virus. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends vaccination of all workers in health care settings, and research has shown that vaccination programs limited only to employees who actively seek the vaccine have lower effectiveness in protecting residents and other employees.

POLICY:

Employees (full time, part time, per diem, PRN, seasonal, occasional), on-site contractors who interact with residents or staff,ⁱ (see footnote one (1.) for which contractors are considered on-site) and volunteers will be required to either be vaccinated or submit a medical or religious waiver request. Within 30 calendar days of mandatory requirement being announced by Blue Skies’ Chief Executive Officer (CEO), all employees will be



required to have begun the vaccination process (have at least one dose administered) and to be fully complete within 60 calendar days. Following the release of the mandatory announcement, **NEW** employees will be required to be vaccinated prior to their start date; agree to accept the vaccination from BST Wellness at time of New Employee Orientation (NEO) and as scheduled for the second dose; obtain vaccination on their own within 15 calendar days following their scheduled day for NEO and be fully complete within 45 calendar days from NEO; or submit a medical or religious waiver request.

At the time of vaccination, employees, on-site contractors, and volunteers must complete the COVID-19 Vaccination Record Card provided through the CDC (MLS_319813_r – 09/03/20 or as may be revised). Other proofs of vaccination may be accepted when approved by the BST Employee Health Nurse. The COVID-19 vaccine will be offered at no charge (either through the Federal Government, use of insurance, or paid by BST) at various times to allow for 100% compliance.

PROCEDURE:

I. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

All employees, on-site contractors, and volunteers must provide a copy of the CDC Vaccination Record Card to the Employee Wellness Nurse

- Employees, on-site contractors, and volunteers who decline the vaccination must submit a medical or religious waiver request **within 30 days of mandatory announcement.**
- Any employee who is not compliant with this policy by **the timelines set** will be placed on an unpaid administrative leave until documentation of vaccination or a completed, approved waiver is received.
 - On-site contractors¹ who do not provide proof of vaccination, will be excluded from working on site and denied access to BST common areas where residents and/or staff may congregate.
 - After 14 calendar days, if the employee, on-site contractor, or volunteer has not provided documentation of vaccination or completed an approved waiver, she/he will be denied participation at BST either through termination of employment, cessation of volunteer status, or a request for replacement as appropriate under the applicable contract agreement.
 - Volunteers will be removed from volunteer duties until an official end to the COVID-19 pandemic is declared by federal authorities.

- New employees, on-site contractors, and volunteers, hired after the announcement of mandatory vaccine, must comply as described in the “POLICY” paragraph on page 1.

A. Waivers

- Medical Waiver: A medical waiver must be signed by the health care provider and returned to the Human Resources Director no later than 30 days following the established deadline. Medical waivers are good for no more than one year.
- Religious Waiver: A religious waiver must be signed by the religious/spiritual leader and returned to the Human Resources Director no later than 30 days following the established deadline. These waivers are not required to be renewed annually. A copy of the credentials of the authority signing the letter must accompany the waiver.
- The Human Resources Director will review all waivers to ensure they comply with the above requirements and will advise of waiver approval accordingly.
- **BST reserves the right at all times to verify the validity of any waiver submitted or to confirm a waiver’s continued applicability.**
- Individuals with waivers to the vaccination requirement will be required to wear a mask while at the work site and follow all other protective measures as prescribed.

B. Records

Records will be maintained documenting both vaccinations and approved waivers in the Employee Health and Human Resources Departments. If national vaccine shortage occurs, BST Leadership may suspend or revoke all or any part of this policy.

C. Vaccine Type

Currently, either the Moderna COVID-19 or Pfizer BioNTech COVID -19 vaccine will be administered to employees, onsite contractors and volunteers based on vaccine availability and in accordance with published CDC guidelines. Both of these vaccines require two doses. This is subject to change based on availability and any subsequent information disseminated by the vaccine providers.

II. RESPONSIBILITIES

A. BST Health Services

1. Complete full implementation of the program to obtain 100% compliance by all employees, on-site contractors, and volunteers.
2. Ensure ample supplies for all employees, on-site contractors, and volunteers.
3. Provide COVID-19 vaccine, virus information, and CDC Proof of Vaccination Form to all employees, on-site contractors, and volunteers upon vaccination.
4. Collect a completed and signed CDC Form from all employees, onsite contractors, and volunteers.
5. In conjunction with Human Resources, maintain electronic records to track:
 - a. Number of vaccinations
 - b. Number of waivers
 - i. Medical reasons
 - ii. Religious reasons
 - c. Number receiving vaccinations from another clinic
 - d. Number of terminations or requests for replacement due to the failure to comply or obtain approved waiver
6. Provide results to the **Chief Health Services Officer** quarterly or as requested.
7. Review and maintain vaccination rates.
8. Recommend revisions to this policy to enhance and improve mandatory COVID-19 vaccination rates within the system.
9. Include requirements of this policy in the local entity policy manual.
10. Announce and declare the official end to the pandemic based upon recommendations by the CDC or any other governing federal authority.

B. Human Resources and Compliance

1. Provide each employee, onsite contractor, and volunteer with information regarding the implementation of this policy.
2. Provide new employees, onsite contractors, and volunteers with information about the mandatory COVID-19 vaccination policy during orientation and where to obtain the vaccine.
3. Notify managers/supervisors and Human Resources regarding those employees, on-site contractors, and volunteers who are not in compliance with the requirements of this policy.
4. Review and approve waivers submitted and confirm validity or continued applicability as appropriate.

A. Health Services Corporation

1. In conjunction with HR, BST Health Services will maintain electronic records to track:



- a. Number of vaccinations
 - b. Number of waivers
 - i. Medical reasons
 - ii. Religious reasons
 - c. Number receiving vaccinations from another clinic
2. Number of terminations for failure to comply

C. Managers/Supervisors

1. Require all employees, onsite contractors, and volunteers under their supervision to comply with the Mandatory COVID-19 Vaccination policy.
2. Alert Human Resources in a timely manner of any employees, onsite contractors, and volunteers who fail to comply with this policy.

D. Employees, Onsite Contractors, and Volunteers

1. Provide Wellness, supervisor, or contract point of contact (as applicable) with a copy of CDC Proof of Vaccination Form.
2. Employees, onsite contractors, and volunteers who received exemptions due to waivers (medical/religious) are required to wear masks while at work and to follow CDC guidelines for wearing masks, social distancing, and infection prevention. Unvaccinated employees working in resident care facilities or congregate residential areas or business support areas, will be masked at all times. Employees will follow the current BST policy for unmasking while consuming food or beverage.

Signed and Approved by:

_____ Date: _____
DARRELL D. JONES, President and CEO

3 Attachments:

1. CV-19 Mandatory Vaccination Form
2. Medical or Religious Waiver Form
3. Facts and Questions (FAQs)



COVID-19 MANDATORY VACCINATION FORM

PLACE AN "X" BY THE APPLICABLE STATEMENT BELOW

- I agree and consent to take the COVID-19 vaccine.

- I received the COVID-19 vaccine from another provider (must provide documentation with location, date, and proof of vaccination).

- I decline the COVID-19 vaccine and have submitted a medical or religious waiver.

- Medical Waiver (see reverse)

- Religious Waiver (see reverse)

Name (Print full name legibly)

Employee ID

Signature

Date



BST MEDICAL OR RELIGIOUS WAIVER

Name of Employee/Contractor/Volunteer (print): _____

Signature : _____ Date: _____

Medical Waiver (Must renew annually) – I _____

_____(Print Physician Name/Title/Specialty)
certify that the above employee is under my medical care and should be exempt from receiving the COVID-19 vaccination due to a medical reason(s). *

Signature

Phone Number

Date

Address: _____

Human Resources Approval/Disapproval (circle one)
Printed Name and Signature: _____ Date: _____

Religious Waiver – I _____ (Print: Employee/Contractor/Vendor’s Name), under my sincerely held religious belief, decline to receive the COVID-19 vaccination. I understand that this waiver need not be renewed annually.

Signature of Employee: _____ Date: _____

I am aware of the individual named above and in my capacity as the individual’s spiritual advisor, I attest to his/her sincerely held religious belief toward refusing a COVID-19 vaccine.

*Religious/Spiritual Leader Name/Title (Print) Phone Number

Signature Address: _____

Phone Number

*** Include copy of credentials**
Human Resources Approval/Disapproval (circle one)
Printed Name and Signature: _____ Date: _____



MANDATORY COVID-19 VACCINATION EMPLOYEE FACTS AND QUESTIONS (FAQs)

This policy applies to employees (full time, part time, per diem, PRN, seasonal, occasional), on-site contractors, and volunteers.

Core Message: This is the right thing to do for our residents and for one another.

Q: Why is Blue Skies of Texas mandating COVID-19 vaccinations?

A: Blue Skies of Texas wants to provide the safest environment possible for residents, employees and their families, and visitors to our facilities. Vaccinations protect residents, employees, and others from the virus. Because the COVID-19 vaccination was originally approved as emergency use, and because of the high number of employees agreeing to be vaccinated prior to the mandate, Blue Skies' leadership felt it was safe to move forward with eased restrictions for those who are vaccinated. Over the last few months, a more contagious variant – the Delta Variant – has emerged. This variant is spreading 2.25 times faster than the original virus.

Q: When will this new policy go into effect?

A: The policy goes into effect immediately, but it allows ample time for those employees who are not vaccinated to complete their vaccination process. Refer to the policy for specific timelines.

Q: I never come in contact with residents. Why do I have to get a vaccine?

A: Even people who don't have direct contact with residents do have contact with caregivers who have direct contact with residents. So even if you don't have direct resident contact, you can inadvertently infect other people who do.

Q: How dare you tell me I must get a vaccine. Blue Skies of Texas has no right to tell me what I can and can't do with my body.

A: Our infection control experts tell us the best way to ensure the safety of our vulnerable residents is for everyone in the organization to get a vaccinated. So while it may seem harsh to a few, it's the right thing to do for our residents and for one another. By doing so, we are building immunity for the entire community.

Q: How will the waivers work?

A: *Employees, on-site contractors, and volunteers who decline for medical or religious reasons will be required to complete and submit a waiver signed by either a health care provider stating they have a medical condition that would prohibit them from receiving the vaccine or a religious leader who can attest to the sincerely held religious beliefs of the employee. Employees will not be required to state the medical condition or to specify their religious beliefs. Human Resources will review the waivers to ensure compliance and provide approval and, when or if necessary, will verify the validity or continued applicability of any waivers submitted.*

Q: Who needs to get vaccinated?

A: *All employees, on-site contractors, and volunteers must be vaccinated unless they submit an approved, written medical or religious waiver by the time specified in the policy.*

Q: Can employees, on-site contractors, and volunteers decline the vaccination?

A: *Yes, if a medical or religious waiver is submitted and approved by the deadline.*

Q: What if an employee, on-site contractor, or volunteer refuse to be vaccinated?

A: *If they refuse to get vaccinated, and they have not submitted an approved medical or religious waiver as required by the policy, they will have 30 calendar days from the compliance start date to either get vaccinated or end their relationship with BST.*

Q: Will a new medical or religious waiver need to be submitted each year?

A: *A new waiver is required each year for medical reasons only. For religious reasons, an employee need only submit the waiver one time. However, should any information come to light that affects the validity or continued applicability, Human Resources can investigate and take action to confirm any waiver's validity or continued applicability.*

Q: What about new employees, on-site contractors, or volunteers?

A: *The policy goes into effect upon the mandatory announcement for all new employees. On-site contractors and volunteers will be subject to the same policy as current contractors and volunteers.*

Q: Will we be required to get additional vaccines?

A: *At this time, BST can't provide a definitive answer. It will depend on the duration of the pandemic and the advice provided by the CDC in future months.*

Q: Can the vaccination make someone sick?

A: *Per the CDC, to date, the systems in place to monitor the safety of these vaccines have found only two serious types of health problems after vaccination, both of which are rare. These are anaphylaxis and thrombosis with thrombocytopenia syndrome (TTS) after vaccination with the J&J/Janssen COVID-19 vaccine.*

Q: If someone feels ill, should they get the COVID-19 vaccination?



A: *The CDC says: People who are moderately or severely ill should usually wait until they recover before getting a vaccine. If you are ill, talk to your doctor about whether to reschedule the vaccination. People with a mild illness can usually still get the vaccine.⁴*

Q: Can employees, on-site contractors, and volunteers get vaccinated from another source besides Blue Skies of Texas?

A: *Yes. However, to ensure proper tracking, everyone must complete the mandatory COVID-19 vaccination form and provide documentation of the date and alternate location where they were vaccinated. Proof of vaccination must be given to BST's employee health nurse or human resources departments (usually a copy of the CDC vaccination card).*

Q: Who should individuals contact if they have any questions?

A: *Employees should contact their manager/supervisor and/or the Blue Skies of Texas' Human Resources Department if they have any questions.*

Q. Which vaccine are you providing?

A. *We have been providing the Pfizer vaccine, but we may also provide the Moderna?*

Q. What is the efficacy of the vaccine being provided?

A. *Although this number may change as more data is collected – it is currently at 95% effective for those who have not had COVID-19.*

Q. Is it normal to get a fever after the COVID-19 vaccine?

A. *In most cases, discomfort from pain or fever is a normal sign that your body is building protection. Contact your doctor or healthcare provider:*

If the redness or tenderness where you got the shot gets worse after 24 hours

If your side effects are worrying you or do not seem to be going away after a few days

Q. Has anyone gotten COVID after being fully vaccinated?

A. *While rare, it is possible that fully vaccinated people can become infected with Covid-19. A recent outbreak of Covid-19 cases associated with the delta variant in Israel included many who had been fully vaccinated, for example. Those are called breakthrough infections, and they are typically mild. We are now seeing the same thing in San Antonio and throughout the United States.*

Q. If I have already had COVID-19 and recovered, do I still need to get vaccinated with a COVID-19 vaccine?

A. *Yes, you should be vaccinated regardless of whether you already had COVID-19. That is because experts do not yet know how long you are provided protection from getting sick again after recovering from COVID-19.*

Footnotes:

¹ On-site contractors are those who work on-site routinely, generally work indoors, and/or work with staff or residents.

² <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/safety/safety-of-vaccines.html>

³ *Five Things to Know About the Delta Variant*, Kathy Katella, July 7, 2021, [Yale Medicine](#)

⁴ *Can you Get a COVID-19 Vaccine if You're Sick with Cold-like Symptoms? Doctors Explain*, Korin Miller, April 27, 2021, [Prevention Magazine](#)

⁵ Question responses taken from the CDC website: <https://www.cdc.gov>