

Vaccine mandate guidelines

Aug 31, 2021

COVID-19 has been with us for more than 18 months now, and CUPE members across the country have been on the frontline of this pandemic from the beginning.



The pandemic has been exhausting for our members, but there is an end in sight

– if enough people get vaccinated. Vaccinations against COVID-19 are safe and effective and readily available, and uptake across the country has been strong. But with new and prevalent variants causing a fourth wave of infection across the country, we need to do better.

CUPE has always encouraged our members to get vaccinated at their earliest opportunity, for the protection of ourselves, our coworkers, and the members of the public accessing the services our members provide. Everyone who can, should get vaccinated against COVID-19.

CUPE welcomes efforts to ensure safer workplaces and increase vaccination rates. This includes increasing vaccine accessibility for workers, accommodating workers who are not yet fully vaccinated, and the small number of those who cannot be.

Governments and employers across the country are discussing vaccine mandates for our workplaces. The following principles should guide CUPE representatives and locals when dealing with workplace vaccine mandates:

- Everyone who can get vaccinated against COVID-19 should.

- Governments and employers need to consult with unions before finalizing and implementing vaccine policies. Locals should reach out to employers proactively and make it clear that the union expects to be consulted about any vaccine policy changes.
- Vaccination programs are most effective when they include strong elements of education and encouragement. Locals should work with employers and public health to provide **vaccine education materials** or presentations.
- Vaccines are an important part of ensuring our workplaces are safe for everyone, and CUPE has always placed a priority on our members' health and safety. Our members have the right to be safe at work, and people have the right to receive public services in a safe environment.
- Vaccine policies are not a replacement for personal protective equipment, proper ventilation, and thorough cleaning regimes.
- Unvaccinated workers need to be provided with an opportunity to speak confidentially with a medical professional so they can better understand the benefits of vaccination. Employers should accommodate these appointments.
- Vaccine policies must accommodate the small number of workers who cannot be vaccinated for medical or religious reasons protected under human rights legislation.
- As a union, we recognize our obligation to those members who are not vaccinated.
- Measures such as alternate work arrangements, screening, and pro-active testing before entering the workplace can be effective.
- Harassment and shaming of workers who refuse vaccination is never appropriate.