

November 1, 2021

Vaccination Policy

From: Dr. Daniel J. Myers, Ph.D., President

Greetings, Misericordia community. I write to share some necessary decisions and alterations regarding our COVID-19 vaccination mandate in the context of the ever-changing challenge that is this pandemic.

As a University, we decided in June to proceed with a COVID-19 vaccine mandate for all, contingent upon FDA approval of one of the vaccines. All the available professional guidance indicated that vaccination was, and remains, the most effective way to limit the spread of the disease and the serious health risk that it presents. FDA approval occurred in late August, and out of a desire not to interrupt faculty and students in the middle of the semester, we pushed the deadline for vaccination to January 3, 2022.

Due to the diligent efforts of our campus community, at this time, over 85% of the students and over 90% of faculty and staff are vaccinated. Our testing program, indoor masking, and other steps have kept COVID infections on campus very low. Thank you to everyone who has helped keep the campus safe by complying with these measures.

Given the current improving trajectory of the pandemic combined with some complex challenges to implement fairly and in a timely manner the exemptions policy as originally planned, **we have decided to modify our vaccine mandate**. We believe this modification will still preserve the health and safety of our campus.

These are some very important and significant changes. Effective immediately:

- We will not dismiss any students or employees because they have not gotten vaccinated, contingent on all unvaccinated students and employees following mitigation as outlined below.
- Registration holds for spring 2022 classes related to lack of vaccination will be lifted.
- All students and employees who have not demonstrated proof of vaccination will be required to upload their proof of vaccination as soon as possible or sign a COVID Safety Agreement by December 20 indicating that they will submit to regular COVID testing and agree to abide by mitigation behaviors as set out by the University.
- To clarify: the religious and medical exemption process previously established is suspended indefinitely due to complex risk management and related issues. Any submitted information will be held confidentially and securely at this time. As per the third bullet on this list, students who filed for exemptions will still need to sign a COVID Safety Agreement as soon as possible or prior to December 20, 2021.
- Any student who intends to do an internship, field placement, or clinical off campus next semester or at any point in the future, may still need to be vaccinated. Off campus sites may still mandate vaccination. Many employers, regardless of industry, may require vaccination to work at that site. The University cannot control the policies of external entities and generally supports vaccination in any regard.

We should also be clear, that the federal government mandate for employers over 100 persons is imminent. This means that **employees of Misericordia University—possibly including student employees (pending federal government rules)—are still going to be subject to some kind of mandate.** The University has yet to see the specific instructions from the government as it relates to employees.

We once again thank all who have received the vaccine; we know that this is the most effective way to avoid contracting COVID, mitigating symptoms, and reducing the spread of the virus. We continue to **very strongly** encourage everyone to be vaccinated.

Finally, the COVID-19 pandemic is an ever-evolving situation, and the Misericordia community may have to, yet again, change course or modify our policies. Anyone who is not vaccinated is subject to a testing regime, which may be escalated in frequency depending on what is necessary to keep the university safe in addition to the dictates of national, state, and local governmental entities, the NCAA, and the MAC.

If you have questions or concerns, feel free to email cougarcare@misericordia.edu

Q & A:

Does the Misericordia University mandate remain in place as previously stated?

No. Because the exemption process has been suspended, the policy has changed. We will continue to maintain existing safety measures, require unvaccinated persons to sign a COVID Safety Agreement, and strongly encourage vaccination.

I applied for an exemption. Will it be granted?

The exemption process is suspended indefinitely. If you applied for an exemption, you will need to sign a COVID Safety Agreement that will require you to follow the appropriate COVID mitigation steps as deemed necessary by the University, including testing, masking, and other things related to the intensity of the health risks at the time. You may also be subject to fines or suspension for non-compliance as well as any costs allowed by law for mitigation efforts.

I have neither applied for an exemption nor uploaded documentation of vaccination. What do I do?

You will need to sign a COVID Safety Agreement that will require you to follow the appropriate COVID mitigation steps as deemed necessary by the University, including testing, masking, and other things related to the intensity of the health risks at the time. You may be subject to fines or suspension for non-compliance as well as any costs allowed by law for mitigation efforts.

Will the vaccine mandate be applied to employees?

Not as previously communicated. We await the federal guidance and regulations regarding vaccination. We plan to comply with the regulations and take other steps necessary to protect health and safety. We strongly and seriously encourage all employees to be vaccinated; however, the January 3, 2022 deadline is no longer in place. Along with federal and state authorities, we consider COVID vaccines to be safe and effective.

I am non-vaccinated student. Can I register on time?

Yes, however, you must complete the COVID Safety Agreement by December 20, 2021 or risk another hold.

How do I get the COVID Safety Agreement?

A link will be sent in the coming weeks to all students and employees and posted on the COVID web page that will take you to the form for completion.

How often will I have to sign the COVID safety form?

The COVID Safety Agreement will remain in effect for as long as you are a student and as long as the University or government regulatory agencies deem that COVID presents a health threat on campus. Should you become vaccinated, upload your proof of vaccination to the Medicat System (students) and send an email to cougarcare@misericordia.edu or report it to Human Resources (employees) and the COVID Safety Agreement will no longer be needed.

It is the university's intent to be operating in as normal a capacity as possible for fall 2021. [Please click here for the latest COUGARCARE guidance for students and employees for Fall 2021 as issued on August 13, 2021.](#)