

August 4, 2021



Hi Team –

Earlier today, I hosted a Town Hall along with key physician and health system leaders to discuss the accelerating spread of the COVID-19 Delta variant and TriHealth’s rapidly evolving response to combat it including how we can best protect our patients, visitors, team members and physicians. We made the decision to delay my Weekly Update by one day in order to share this important information first during Town Hall and then in

written form for those team members and physicians who could not attend the Town Hall.

Since the start of the COVID pandemic — now in its 18th month — we have learned that this virus if nothing else is unpredictable. And just as we believed the worst was behind us, a new more contagious variant has emerged that is once again rapidly increasing new cases and hospitalizations and, sadly, deaths.

Throughout this pandemic, TriHealth has consistently placed the safety of our team members, physicians, patients and visitors as our highest priority. By following the evidence-based guidance of the CDC, ODH and FDA, we have often led the region in establishing COVID safety protocols and best practices to minimize the risk of exposure to the virus and to help ensure our most vulnerable and at-risk patients and frontline caregivers have been protected.

The science is clear – with more than 3 billion doses administered worldwide, COVID vaccines have proven beyond a doubt to be safe and effective at reducing the risk of transmission to others, decreasing hospitalizations and preventing COVID-related deaths. Vaccination among all eligible individuals is our only way to achieve herd immunity against this virus and put an end to this deadly pandemic once and for all. However, with less than 70% of our workforce fully vaccinated, there is work to be done here at TriHealth to ensure we are doing all we can to protect our patients and prevent continued transmission of the virus in the community.

That is why TriHealth is standing alongside the Ohio Hospital Association (OHA), the American Hospital Association (AHA), the American Medical Association (AMA), every other health system in Greater Cincinnati and most around the state in implementing a **COVID vaccination requirement for all team members, physicians and volunteers— which is very similar to the flu and other vaccines that have been required for years.** We are taking this necessary step now because as CDC Director Dr. Rochelle Walensky said last week, “the war has changed...the Delta variant is the most transmissible virus we know about.” With the rapid increase in COVID infections due to this much more contagious variant, including among our own unvaccinated team members, we have had to change and adapt our tactics in response to this much more serious threat. **And because of the high prevalence of the virus in our region and new CDC recommendations, we will also be reinstating mask wearing in ALL TriHealth locations,** not just those areas of direct patient care. This too is something that all health systems in the region are doing to protect staff and patients.

If you have not yet received the vaccine, as a “badge wearing” team member, physician, volunteer, or student, you will be required to be fully vaccinated by early October. As has been our practice with the flu and other vaccines, exemptions will be considered and made for documented medical reasons or deeply held religious beliefs. If you apply for and receive an exemption, you will be required to undergo weekly testing to minimize risk of transmission to our patients or other healthcare workers.

We want to better understand the concerns of some of our team members about the vaccines, to answer their questions, so we are planning a number of forums during August and September. Dates, times and locations will

be provided in the coming days and will be available on Bridge. The details related to the rollout and administration of the vaccines are being finalized with our Infection Prevention and Employee Health experts and will be communicated shortly. In the meantime, please refer to the attached Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document which will answer most of your questions. If you have other questions, please reach out to your leader or to Employee Health and we will get you the information you need.

As healthcare workers, we take an oath to “do no harm” and when it comes to preventing the spread of vaccine preventable communicable diseases like COVID, becoming vaccinated is how we protect ourselves and avoid unintentional harm to those we serve. We are now in the fourth wave of this pandemic—a pandemic largely of the unvaccinated and, sadly, those that can’t be vaccinated like children. The longer the virus circulates among these populations, the greater the probability that it will mutate into a variant that cannot be stopped by our current vaccine, placing us back to square one in our fight against COVID!

Our physician and senior leaders have evaluated the possibility of a vaccination requirement for months and we have discussed it openly in Town Hall Meetings. And through this evaluation, we have attempted to balance patient, team member and physician safety with individual choice. In the end, we must put patient and team member safety first and follow the scientific data that has proven overwhelmingly the safety and efficacy of the vaccines.

Throughout this pandemic, we have faced unrelenting challenges and unforeseen adversity, and you and our 13,000 team members and physicians have each answered the call to bravely carry out our mission to serve our patients. And now we are asking you to once again step up for our patients and each other. Your unwavering commitment to get healthcare right for our community – better care, better health, better value – will help us lead the way in improving the health of the communities we serve.