

COVID Vaccination, Testing, and Masking FAQs



Below are answers to frequently asked questions regarding COVID masking, vaccination, and testing.

MASKING REQUIREMENTS IN SCHOOLS

What are the masking requirements in public schools?

Both vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals, including staff, students, and everyone else, must wear a mask while in a school at times when students are present, with certain limited exceptions described below.

On August 7, 2021, pursuant to the Governor's Executive Order 13A, the Department of Public Health (DPH) issued its updated listing of facilities where masks are always required, regardless of vaccination status. The listing includes PreK-12 public and private school buildings at times when students are present. The listing notes that, as an example, fully vaccinated staff do not need to wear a mask when in a school building on a weekend or after hours when students are not present inside the building. School buses are also locations where masks are always required to be worn, regardless of vaccination status.

The legislature extended the governor's pandemic emergency powers through February 15, 2022, although it is not certain that mask mandates in schools will extend until that time.

What are the limited exceptions to mask wearing in public schools when students are present?

Executive Order 13A states that any person who declines to wear a mask because of a medical condition, behavioral condition, or disability shall be exempt from any requirement to wear masks if the person provides written documentation that the person

is qualified for an exemption "from a licensed or certified medical provider, psychologist, marriage and family therapist, professional counselor, social worker, or behavior analyst, the Department of Developmental Services or other state agency that provides or supports services for people with emotional, intellectual or physical disabilities, or a person authorized by any such agency."

The Order states that this documentation does not specifically have to name or describe the condition that qualifies the person for the exemption. However, it would be a reasonable surmise that (as was the case during the 2020-2021 school year) the SDE will provide further direction to problems that are unique to schools, such as protocols for possible exemptions for students with disabilities and/or who require special education and related services.

COVID VACCINATION/TESTING REQUIREMENTS IN SCHOOLS

What are the vaccination requirements for public school staff?

Under Executive Order 13G, public school staff hired by a district before September 27, 2021, do not have to apply for religious or medical exemptions and have two options: 1) getting fully vaccinated or 2) submitting to weekly testing.

Anyone hired on or after September 27, 2021, must 1) be vaccinated or 2) have a religious or medical exemption.

Anyone who is not fully vaccinated (either because they were hired prior to September 27, 2021, and opted not to get vaccinated or because they have

a religious or medical exemption) must submit to weekly testing unless they qualify for a temporary waiver on the basis of having had COVID-19 within the prior 90 days.

When is an individual considered fully vaccinated?

An individual is considered fully vaccinated either (a) 2 weeks after their second dose in a 2 dose series, such as the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines, or (b) 2 weeks after a single-dose vaccine, such as Johnson & Johnson's Janssen vaccine.

What is acceptable proof of COVID-19 vaccination?

Individuals may prove their COVID-19 vaccination status by providing the school district with a copy of any one of the following categories of documentation plus a signed declaration of authenticity form: 1) a valid CDC Vaccination Card, 2) a record from the individual's vaccine provider, 3) a certificate from the Vaccine Administration Management System ("VAMS"), if the individual received vaccination through the VAMS system, or 4) a copy of the individual's official immunization record from the Connecticut Immunization Information System (CT WiZ).

What is the basis for the medical, religious, or spiritual exemptions from vaccination?

Public school staff can seek a medical, religious, or spiritual exemption from the vaccination requirement by completing an exemption form provided by their district. The medical exemption form must be signed by the individual's physician (MD or DO), physician's assistant (PA), or advance

practice nurse practitioner (APRN). Exemption requests must be considered on a case-by-case basis, but staff granted exemptions will still need to provide weekly testing results. Public school staff who are not fully vaccinated must submit to testing. There is no exemption from testing for unvaccinated individuals.

Note: public school staff hired by a district before September 27, 2021 do not need an exemption and can choose to opt for weekly testing rather than vaccination without needing to request an exemption.

How does an individual who is not fully vaccinated but who has had COVID-19 get a temporary waiver from testing?

Public school staff who are not fully vaccinated and who have had COVID-19 within the prior 90 days can request a temporary waiver from testing by submitting a copy of the Temporary Waiver request form, signed by their healthcare provider, using the submission format and process your district has for submitting test results.

Please reach out to your district's HR department first for this document. If they are unable to provide it, contact your Local President or CEA UniServ Rep.

What types of tests are accepted for the weekly testing requirement for unvaccinated public school staff?

To comply with the testing requirement, testing must be either PCR (including saliva-based tests) or antigen SARS-CoV-2 tests, and must be administered and reported by a state licensed clinical laboratory, pharmacy-based testing provider, or other healthcare provider facility with a current Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments (CLIA) waiver. Home-based testing and results obtained at other types of facilities not listed above are not considered adequate proof to meet the testing requirement.

Test result reports should include the name and location of the testing laboratory or provider facility

If you have additional questions, contact your local president who can connect you with your CEA UniServ Representative for further guidance.

performing the test, the name of the person tested, the date the sample was collected, and the test result. Results must be submitted within 72 hours of the test administration date to be deemed compliant with the testing requirement.

Are there any locations that will provide testing to public school employees without out-of-pocket costs?

Yes. The State Department of Education and Department of Public Health issued a statement that: "Persons being tested for COVID-19 at State Supported Testing Sites will be asked for their insurance information but there will be no out-of-pocket expenses. Additionally, if their insurance does not pay, the individual will not be billed. Note: If individuals do not have insurance, they will be tested and not billed at any of these State Supported Testing Sites."

State-supported Department of Public Health established testing sites can be found at portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Digest/2021-22/State-Supported-Testing-Sites.pdf.

What if a public school employee who is not fully vaccinated refuses to submit to weekly testing?

After September 27, 2021, public school employees who are not fully vaccinated and who fall out of compliance by failing to submit adequate proof of a weekly test will not

be allowed on school premises. Any further consequences (e.g. discipline or termination) for a refusal to receive weekly testing will be determined by the school board, to the extent permissible by law and any collective bargaining agreements, etc.

Is there any expectation of confidentiality with respect to documentation of vaccination?

Yes. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) guidance states that documentation of vaccination needs to be kept confidential and separate from the employee's personnel file.

According to the EEOC, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires an employer to maintain the confidentiality of employee medical information, such as documentation or other confirmation of COVID-19 vaccination, regardless of where the employee is vaccinated. "Although the EEO laws themselves do not prevent employers from requiring employees to bring in documentation or other confirmation of vaccination, this information, like all medical information, must be kept confidential and stored separately from the employee's personnel files under the ADA." EEOC guidance can be found at eoc.gov/wysk/what-you-should-know-about-covid-19-and-ada-rehabilitation-act-and-other-eeo-laws#B.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES/GUIDANCE

Additional information and guidance can be found in the following documents.

- **Implementation Guidance for Executive Order 13G**

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DAS/Statewide-HR/Vaccine-App-Docs-Forms/IMPLEMENTATION-GUIDANCE-FOR-EXECUTIVE-ORDER-13G_Revised_09162021.pdf

- **Executive Order 13G**

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/Office-of-the-Governor/Executive-Orders/Lamont-Executive-Orders/Executive-Order-No-13G.pdf>

- **Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Vaccinations for Covered Workers in Schools**

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Digest/2021-22/VaccineFAQs.pdf>