



# CONSIDERATIONS FOR CAMPUS DECISIONMAKERS ANNOUNCING CONTINUATION OF OR CHANGES TO VACCINE REQUIREMENTS

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As institutions of higher education (IHEs) continue examining their COVID-19 vaccination policies for the next semester and academic year, many will maintain the requirements that have been effective in achieving high rates of vaccine uptake on campus. For those reviewing vaccine requirements, the ACHA COVID-19 Task Force and the ACHA CoVAC Initiative encourage campus decisionmakers to consider the following:

- **There has been a long history of health and vaccination requirements for students** at IHEs in order to create an environment that promotes the public health of the community. This has resulted in a safer environment for students to learn, work, and live on campus. Now, largely due to the COVID-19 pandemic, some campuses have extended these requirements to employees as well.<sup>1</sup>
- **Vaccine requirements have been found to be effective in increasing the numbers of those on campus being immunized against COVID-19.** According to the recently released National Survey of College Student COVID-19 Vaccination Uptake, Attitudes, Experiences, and Intentions, “college vaccination requirements [are] a significant, independent predictor of uptake. Forty-three percent of participants reported that their school had a requirement in place and among those, 18% of students had obtained their COVID-19 vaccine because it was required. COVID-19 vaccine uptake is nearly universal on those campuses which required it. Approximately eight in 10 students at schools with these requirements felt safer on campus as a result.”<sup>2</sup>
- **Campus health professionals should be consulted well in advance of any vaccine-related policy announcements and be part of developing a unified communication plan.** Campus health professionals are often the first to communicate with students, parents, and community members with questions about vaccine requirements. Campus leadership should provide them with sufficient information to answer questions or concerns in a way that builds trust with the community and demonstrates consistency across departments. Campus health professionals should also have support from supervisors including a contact to whom they should refer community members with concerns.

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<sup>1</sup> [Immunization Practices in College Health: Requirements, Coverage, and Data: A 2021-2022 American College Health Foundation Survey](#)

<sup>2</sup> [National Survey of College Student COVID-19 Vaccination Uptake, Attitudes, Experiences, and Intentions](#)

- **Proactively prepare for the needs of students and employees at high-risk of becoming seriously ill from COVID-19 and who may need additional accommodations.** People at higher risk for complications from COVID-19 include those over age 65 as well as those students, faculty, and staff with underlying health conditions or disabilities. Any policy announcement that can impact members of the campus community at highest risk should be paired with thoughtful plans to address their questions and concerns.
- **The timing of any vaccine-related policy changes should be given careful consideration.** Foreseeable vaccine policy changes should be announced with ample time to permit students to comply and make thoughtful decisions about enrollment. When policies are announced in advance, college and local health professionals can advise students and families on the optimal timing for booster administration. Mid-semester changes should be avoided unless public health conditions create an urgent need for an abrupt change in policy.
- **Whether requirements are in place or have been reduced or eliminated, IHEs must devote resources to building and maintaining vaccine confidence and ensuring equitable vaccine access for students.** Educational outreach must convey the importance of vaccination as the best way to ensure a full and robust campus experience.<sup>3</sup> Building vaccine confidence and ensuring vaccine access requires specific skills such as those held by public health or health promotion specialists. Campus health leaders should be consulted when changes to vaccine policies are being considered. They, in turn, should engage community partners including the local health department, community-based organizations, and local pharmacies to ensure access.

Vaccination has profound implications for the community at large – on and off campus. Vaccine confidence is a lifelong health literacy skill, and campuses will continue to reckon with confidence levels towards other vaccine-preventable diseases, as well. Educational institutions should clearly communicate the reasons for any vaccine requirement to the campus community. Students should be assisted in developing confidence as the foundation for attitudes towards vaccination as they become consumers of health care beyond college and decision-makers for the next generation.<sup>4</sup>

- **IHE leadership should prepare for barriers to equitable access to COVID-19 vaccinations and testing.** When the federal public health emergency declaration on COVID-19 expires, college students may face new barriers to equitable access to COVID-19 vaccination. According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, college students with private insurance will continue to have cost coverage for COVID-19 vaccination services from in-network providers only; students seeking COVID-19 vaccination from out-of-network providers could incur out of pocket costs.<sup>5</sup>

This may be a particular concern for students insured through a parent in another state or locality, or those with restrictive networks. Students without insurance will no longer have a pathway through Medicaid for free COVID-19 testing, vaccines, or treatment. Students on Medicaid or using the CHIP program for themselves or dependents may or may not have continued coverage for COVID-19 testing, treatment, and vaccines as their specific state Medicaid program will have a choice on whether to continue such coverage. The

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<sup>3</sup> [Creating COVID-19 Vaccination Plans: Key Considerations for Institutions of Higher Education](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Vaccine Confidence: Building the Case on Campuses With and Without COVID-19 Vaccine Requirements](#)

<sup>5</sup> [What Happens When COVID-19 Emergency Declarations End? Implications for Coverage, Costs, and Access | KFF](#)

only guaranteed coverage element that will remain for uninsured or Medicaid-enrolled students or dependents after the public health emergency ends is the Vaccines for Children program for any students or dependents who are younger than age 19 years.

While much progress has been made in addressing issues related to COVID-19 vaccine confidence and increasing vaccination among college students, campus leaders must continue to prepare for the future by consulting with their public health leaders on campus, providing resources as needed, and supporting health education strategies to increase vaccine confidence and uptake.



AMERICAN COLLEGE HEALTH ASSOCIATION  
Campus COVID-19 Vaccination and Mitigation Initiative

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