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COVID-19 Update 8/23/21: Full Approval for Pfizer Vaccine and More



Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine receives full FDA approval

On August 23, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) granted full approval of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine. The FDA says the vaccine will now be marketed under the name Comirnaty for people ages 16 and older. The vaccine also continues to be available under emergency use authorization for children ages 12 through 15, and for the administration of a third dose in certain immunocompromised people.

Nursing homes risk losing Medicare and Medicaid funding unless they require staff to get

vaccinated

On August 18, President Biden announced that nursing home staff must be vaccinated against COVID-19 or the facilities employing them could lose federal Medicare and Medicaid funding.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, only about 62% of nursing home staff had been vaccinated as of August 8, 2021.

The Department of Health and Human Services may issue the new mandate as soon as early September. Nursing home operators may want to revisit company vaccination policies to ensure their Medicare and Medicaid funding is not jeopardized.

New York requires COVID-19 vaccine for health care workers

On August 16, the Governor of New York announced that all health care workers in the state are required to be vaccinated against COVID-19. This includes staff at hospitals and long-term care facilities such as nursing homes, adult care facilities and other congregate care settings. The mandate extends to both public and privately employed health care workers.

The New York State Department of Health is expected to issue orders implementing this policy.

The announcement follows a previous order mandating all of the state's patient-facing health care workers at state-run hospitals to be vaccinated against COVID-19 by Labor Day.

Washington, D.C. extends COVID-19 leave laws through November

The District of Columbia recently extended its COVID-19 leave laws through November 5, 2021.

Due to the public health emergency, the district enacted laws requiring employers to give employees both paid and unpaid leave for certain reasons related to COVID-19. Recently, D.C. Mayor Bowser signed emergency legislation to extend these leave laws through November.

All D.C. employers must provide employees who have been employed for at least 30 days with up to 16 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave if they are unable to work due to COVID-19-related reasons. Employers must also provide up to 80 hours of paid sick leave to employees for any of the reasons that federal paid leave was available under the now-expired Families First Coronavirus Response Act. The paid sick leave requirement applies to employers with 50 to 499 employees, and covers any employee who has been employed for at least 15 days.

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