

UPDATED AUG. 26, 2021

## **COVID-19 Staff Mitigation Plan Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)**

### **What is the COVID-19 Staff Mitigation Plan?**

This plan is a multifaceted approach to combat the spread of COVID-19 among the Johnson County workforce. For the plan to have the greatest impact, each of the components should be employed simultaneously. The plan includes the following, and more detail [is available here](#).

- Continuing the following measures already in place: Mask requirements for employees, physical distancing, using staggered shifts, remote work, and virtual meetings (scheduled in collaboration with your supervisor), restrictions on employee travel, use of physical barriers, and continued use of COVID-19 sanitization and ventilation protocols instituted by the Facilities Department.
- Mandatory COVID-19 testing for all employees with an opt-out if you are fully vaccinated and have not requested a mask accommodation (more details below).
- Optional vaccinations (more details below) with paid time off for benefits-ineligible employees who experience symptoms related to the vaccination.

### **Why do we need a COVID-19 Staff Mitigation Plan?**

First, as a caring workplace, we want to do whatever we can to help protect you and your loved ones from the virus. In addition, it is imperative that, to the best of our ability, Johnson County Government has available a sufficient number of healthy and non-quarantined staff, both overall and in individual departments, agencies and offices to provide the services upon which the public relies. Further, as stewards of the community's resources and as the provider of a self-insured health plan, it is our responsibility to help manage health care costs by maintaining a healthy workplace. According to Johnson County Department of Health and Environment (DHE) officials, unvaccinated individuals have a greater risk of becoming seriously ill and requiring hospitalization, which in turn, increases health care expenses. Additionally, this plan will help prevent infection of the public by Johnson County staff.

National, local and internal statistics reveal that over the last several weeks, there has been a rapid increase in COVID-19 cases in the metropolitan area, including Johnson County, as well as among Johnson County staff. While the current spike is related primarily to the delta variant of the virus, until more people are vaccinated, our health department officials tell us that we can expect new variants, which may be even more transmissible, more virulent or better able to avoid the immune protection from currently available vaccines, as well as a rise in cases during the winter months, and continued spread of COVID-19.

### **What is new in this plan?**

This is more of an expansion of the mitigation measures already in place than it is a brand-new plan. Two new measures will be implemented. Effective Aug. 23, employees who are not fully vaccinated and employees who are fully vaccinated but have an approved accommodation exempting them from the mask mandate are required to submit to weekly or twice weekly COVID-19 testing. The other new component is that to be considered fully vaccinated and eligible to opt out of the regular testing, employees will need to upload proof of their COVID-19 vaccination into Oracle.

### **What is the county's definition of "fully-vaccinated?"**

Employees are considered fully vaccinated when:

- Two weeks have passed since receiving the second dose of a dual-dose vaccination or one dose of a single-dose vaccination.
- You have uploaded a copy of your vaccination record into Oracle.

### **How long will this plan be in place?**

The plan will be in place at long as it is needed. At this time, we cannot say specifically when that will be. The County Manager may revise this plan as appropriate, in consultation with the Director of DHE and the DHE Local Health Officer.

### **Detailed FAQ on mandatory testing**

#### **How often do I need to get tested?**

Most employees who do not qualify to opt out will get tested once a week.

Because they provide services requiring close interaction with clients, and because of interaction between staff who provide such services and those who do not, all employees in the following departments and agencies who do not qualify to opt out are subject to tests up to twice weekly: Aging and Human Services, Corrections, Emergency Services, Health and Environment, Mental Health, and Developmental Supports.

#### **\*UPDATED\* Do I get tested on a certain day?**

The Department of Human Resources (HRD) and DHE worked together on the testing schedule and protocol for your department, agency, or office. For more information, download our [Testing Logistics spreadsheet](#).

#### **Will these tests be the nasal swabs?**

No, in most cases, because they are less intrusive and uncomfortable, the contracted testing provider will use saliva tests. Nasal swab tests will be required for individuals for whom a saliva test is ineffective.

#### **Do I have to go to my doctor or a pharmacy to get tested?**

No. Test kits are being provided by Clinical Reference Laboratory and will be distributed to departments, agencies and offices by HRD. Participating employees will self-administer the test, which involves collecting their own saliva into a test tube. They will return the test kit to a designated location. Departments, agencies and offices will soon get more details on their testing logistics.

**\*NEW\*** **Are there instructions on how to complete the test?** Yes, each self-collection testing kit comes with thorough instructions for registering your test, preparing for it, collecting a sample, labeling the collection device and packaging your sample. You will then drop it off at the designated site for your work location. You can also watch this [short video](#) that describes the test and the steps to successfully complete it.

**\*NEW\*** **What happens if I forget to register my kit?** If you legibly wrote your full name on the barcode label, CRL will notify Human Resources and we will reach out to you to register your kit.

**\*NEW\*** **What happens if I am out on a day I am scheduled to test?** You will need to complete the test on the day you return to a worksite, even if it is not a testing date for your location. Please work with your supervisor to determine the best method for handling the completed sample. If you will be out for an entire week, you should email [HRD-testresults@jocogov.org](mailto:HRD-testresults@jocogov.org).

**Do I have to pay for testing?**

All test kits will be provided free of charge to employees, and the testing will be free of charge as well.

**Who has access to my results?**

HRD and DHE will receive the test results. Departments, agencies and offices will **not** receive the results directly. Test results will be maintained in HRD as confidential medical records.

**\*NEW\*** **Can I get my own results?** Yes, you will be notified of your test result by text or voice message. You may also access your results at [www.crl.com](http://www.crl.com) by clicking on the results icon at the top of the page and following the instructions.

**What happens if I test positive?**

Employees who test positive will be required to isolate. HRD staff will contact those with a positive result to confirm that they are not in the workplace and to investigate potential exposure of co-workers and others. HRD staff will notify those who been exposed to an employee who has tested positive but will not identify that employee by name. Those exposed will be required to quarantine according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance.

**What if I decide to get vaccinated? Can I stop testing?**

Once you are fully vaccinated (see definition above) you no longer have to participate in the mandatory testing program provided that you have not been given an accommodation with regard to the mask mandate.

**\*UPDATED\*** **How do I upload my vaccination card?**

Staff will have access to the upload tool in Oracle beginning Friday, Aug. 13. The cutoff for the first test will be Thursday, Aug. 19. Anyone who has uploaded proof of being fully vaccinated by then will not have to be tested the week of Aug. 23. Data of uploaded vaccination cards will be looked at weekly. [Learn more about uploading your card here.](#)

**What if I am fully vaccinated but have lost my card?**

If you received your COVID-19 vaccination from DHE, you can [complete this form](#) (English) [or this form](#) (Spanish) and send it back to DHE. For medical record questions, email [MedicalRecords-DHE@jocogov.org](mailto:MedicalRecords-DHE@jocogov.org)

If you received your vaccine from another provider, please contact them for a copy of your records.

**\*NEW\*** **If I forgot to upload my vaccination card, do I have to test every week?** Yes, unless your attestation is completed and your vaccination card is uploaded in Oracle Self-Service Human Resources (SSHR) showing you are considered fully vaccinated, you will need to test every week according to your department/agency/office schedule. All uploads must be completed by noon on Thursday in order to be exempted from testing the following week and thereafter.

**I already reported my vaccination dates in Oracle. Do I still have to provide proof of vaccination?**

Yes, although we appreciate vaccination dates shared through Oracle we will now require the

accompanying documentation in Oracle. You may have uploaded your vaccination record onto Asset Health's website for purposes of the Wellness Program. The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) prevents Asset Health from sharing the information with the county.

**I have uploaded into Oracle proof that I am fully vaccinated but am interested in participating in this weekly testing. Am I eligible?**

Yes, employees who are not required to test may do so voluntarily on the scheduled days for their Department, agency, or office. There will be no charge for employees who test voluntarily. If you are interested, please email [HRD-testresults@jocogov.org](mailto:HRD-testresults@jocogov.org).

**Does this plan apply to volunteers? Contractors or vendors?**

Contractors and volunteers are required to comply with the same mask requirements as employees. At this time, Johnson County is not requiring contractors or volunteers to be vaccinated or submit to COVID-19 tests.

**\*NEW\*** Why aren't we testing volunteers, temps and others that are in our workspace? While we understand the importance of taking all precautionary steps in the workplace, our first priority is implementing a testing process that is as smooth and efficient as possible for employees. Once those processes are well established, we will then start addressing the variables and logistics necessary to successfully begin testing volunteers, temps and other non-employee workers.

**\*NEW\*** I've received a booster vaccination. Should I upload it into Oracle? No, please do not upload a booster vaccination card at this time. We are working on a method to store booster information so that we can accurately track your vaccination status.

**FAQs about authority and accommodations**

**How to I request an accommodation?**

Employees may contact HRD to request accommodation on disability or religious grounds. Requests made to supervisors must be referred to HRD. Employees have the option of being vaccinated or submitting to the periodic testing described above. At this time, both vaccinated and unvaccinated employees must comply with the mask requirements. Masks are particularly important for unvaccinated employees. According to our public health officials, submitting to testing without complying with the mask requirements is not a reasonable alternative to vaccination at this time. HRD will discuss other possible accommodations with employees.

**What gives the county manager the authority to enforce this plan, including mandatory testing?**

Human Resources Policy 106 authorizes the County Manager to issue executive orders during a state of emergency, such as a pandemic, to ensure that the county can avoid severe and negative impacts of the emergency, for example, the need to close offices or stop services due to an outbreak of COVID-19 among staff.

**Isn't this a HIPAA violation? Can you legally require me to get tested and/or give you my vaccination status?**

HIPAA does not prohibit employers, including the county, from requiring their employees to get tested

for COVID-19 or provide vaccination status. HIPAA also does not prohibit the testing laboratory from providing results to HRD or DHE.

**What if I refuse to get vaccinated or tested?**

As with any county policy, employees are expected to comply. If you are unable to be vaccinated or tested due to a disability or religious reason, you should contact HRD to discuss possible accommodation. Also, DHE staff are willing to meet with employees who have concerns about vaccination to answer any questions you may have. DHE cannot provide you with medical advice, though.

**What if I have questions?**

Please feel free to contact your HRD partner with any questions about this plan.