



COVID-19 Vaccination Policy

The COVID-19 pandemic took a devastating toll, infecting millions with a life-threatening illness and precipitating catastrophic financial hardship for millions more. Widespread vaccination will play a major role in controlling the virus and restoring our countries' economies.

The United Steelworkers (USW) believes that vaccinations should occur in a just, fair and equitable manner that ensures that communities that experience the most risk of severe disease and death are prioritized for access to vaccinations.

The USW also supports CDC recommendations that health care workers receive the COVID-19 vaccination to protect themselves and vulnerable members of the community and that, as it becomes available, it should be free of charge for everyone with no out-of-pocket costs.

However, the USW does not support mandatory immunization as either a condition of employment or as a state or federal mandate. As with other vaccines, USW believes that COVID-19 vaccination should be voluntary, and the union intends to continue fighting for vaccination policies that include informed consent and education regarding vaccination benefits and risks.

We expect employers to attempt to mandate vaccinations and/or restrict work areas based on vaccination status, but it is an open legal question as to whether employers can mandate this vaccine because it is currently only approved under the Emergency Use Authorization.

We should demand to bargain over employers' vaccination policies. If a flu shot policy already exists in the workplace, it could serve as a framework to bargain a COVID-19 vaccination policy. For example, exemptions made for medical reasons and sincerely held religious beliefs may be included in the workplace already and provide language that both parties are already comfortable using. Some facilities also offer declination forms for those refusing other vaccinations, such as hepatitis B. These forms typically detail that the vaccination has been declined after the individual received information regarding the benefits and risks. Regardless of bargaining, employers are required to accommodate medical conditions and religious objections.

Further, vaccination does not absolve employers of their obligation to continue existing workplace protections for the coronavirus or to maintain the controls needed to protect workers from exposure, including effective ventilation and appropriate and adequately-supplied PPE. Workplace accommodations for those at high risk of severe illness or death must remain in place and should be, where necessary, expanded upon to protect health care and other workers.

States will each set their own policies regarding categories of people who will be eligible to receive the first COVID-19 vaccinations, as well as the order in which others will be granted access as more doses become available. The definition of "essential workers" is also a state function. Providing USW members with access to COVID-19 vaccinations may involve political action to ensure members who have been treated as "essential" throughout the pandemic remain a priority. Additional data on state plans for rollout can be found under the [National Academy for State Health Policy website](#).

The USW will continuously monitor data as it becomes available regarding safety and efficacy of COVID-19 vaccinations and will continue to advocate for the safety of health care workers and the public.