A week after issuing the first in the nation order mandating all healthcare workers to be vaccinated against COVID-19, on August 11, 2021, the state of California issued an order mandating either vaccination or regular testing for all workers of schools throughout the state.
The order issued by the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), applies to public and private schools serving students in transitional kindergarten through grade 12. Home schools, childcare, and higher education are not included in the order.

Covered schools must verify the vaccination status of all workers, following the CDPH guidance for vaccine records. Under this guidance only the following may be used as proof of vaccination:

- COVID-19 Vaccination Record Card (issued by the Department of Health and Human Services Centers for Disease Control & Prevention or WHO Yellow Card) which includes the name of the person vaccinated, type of vaccine provided, and date the last dose was administered;

- a photo of a Vaccination Record Card as a separate document;

- a photo of the client’s Vaccination Record Card stored on a phone or electronic device;

- documentation of COVID-19 vaccination from a health care provider;

- a digital record that includes a QR code that when scanned by a SMART Health Card reader displays to the reader client name, date of birth, vaccine dates, and vaccine type; or

- documentation of vaccination from other contracted employers who follow these vaccination records guidelines and standards.

Schools are required to make a plan for tracking verified worker vaccination status and have records of vaccination verification available to provide to the local health jurisdiction for purposes of case investigation.

Workers who are not fully vaccinated, or for whom vaccine status is unknown or documentation is not provided, must be considered unvaccinated.

The order also mandates regular COVID-19 testing for unvaccinated workers. Unvaccinated workers must be tested at least once weekly with either PCR testing or antigen testing.

Unvaccinated or incompletely vaccinated workers must also observe all other infection control requirements and are not exempted from the testing requirement even if they have a medical contraindication to vaccination.

Schools with workers required to undergo COVID-19 testing should have a plan in place for tracking test results and conducting workplace contact tracing and must report results to local public health departments.

The order became effective on August 12, 2021. However, covered facilities have until October 15, 2021, to be in full compliance with the requirements.

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