

## COVID-19 VACCINATION FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

### **Q1. Are supervisors or Commanders authorized to *order* civilian employees to get vaccinated?**

**A1.** No. DoD civilian employees currently may NOT be ordered or mandated to receive a vaccine.

### **Q2. Are supervisors or Commanders authorized to *offer* civilian employees vaccination?**

**A2.** Yes. In accordance with DAF memorandum *Department of the Air Force (DAF) Intent for Vaccinating the Total Force and Beneficiaries* (Jan 14 2021), Commanders may offer vaccination to civilian employees in accordance with the DoD COVID-19 vaccine priority schema. Commanders should consult with their servicing Medical Treatment Facility to understand the local vaccine roll out before authorizing vaccination to civilian employees. Any discussion to make an offer of vaccination should be brief, consisting only of whether or not the employee wants the vaccine with a concise statement that it is completely voluntary, and a simple yes or no response from the employee as to whether they are interested. Employees are free to decline such an offer, and will not be subject to adverse personnel action or management responses for doing so.

### **Q3. Are supervisors or Commanders authorized to *suggest* civilian employees get vaccinated on their own, through their private health providers?**

**A3.** No. Commanders may offer COVID-19 vaccination to civilian employees, but may not suggest or recommend, or offer in such a way that it appears to be anything other than at the employee's discretion. An employee is free to decline such an offer, and will not be subject to adverse personnel action or management responses for doing so.

### **Q4. By itself, does vaccination mean a person is safe (either from getting infected or from transmitting the virus) to be in the workplace?**

**A4.** Not necessarily. These novel vaccines are designed to protect people from severe COVID-19 disease and death. No vaccine is 100% effective and we do not yet know whether these vaccines will keep people from becoming mildly ill, prevent them from transmitting the virus, or whether the current vaccines have similar efficacy against new variants of the virus. Therefore Commanders must continue to implement/use all available mitigation strategies (i.e. maximizing telework, enforcing mandatory mask wearing for all individuals, minimum 6-foot social distancing, etc.), continue to protect vulnerable populations, and use expanded testing capacity to surveil and protect the Total Force and our families. Managers and employees are also reminded that maximum vaccine efficacy isn't achieved until after a period of time (approximately 2 weeks) has passed following administration of the second dose (applies to the currently EUA-approved vaccines). Employees should also consult with their medical providers regarding risks associated with, and timing of, returning to regular worksites.

**Q5. Our Commander has authorized the vaccine be offered to DoD civilian employees through our Military Treatment Facility. If my civilian employee wants to accept the offer to get the vaccine through the DoD, what duty status should they be in when going to get the shot?**

**A5.** DoD civilian employees who accept an offer to get vaccinated through the DoD shall receive the time necessary to obtain the vaccination, generally up to 4 hours per vaccination event. This includes the time spent traveling to/from and getting vaccinated. They should NOT be charged personal leave, and other statuses (such as on-duty status or weather/safety leave) are not appropriate. Under *usual* circumstances, civilian employees who wish to seek medical treatment, including receiving vaccinations, would be required to request sick leave (or annual leave, leave without pay, compensatory time off or earned credit hours) to cover the period of absence while seeking/receiving medical treatment. However, because of the officially declared state of emergency caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, it is in the interest of the Department of the Air Force for the workforce to be vaccinated as soon as possible; therefore, traveling to/from and receiving the vaccine is an authorized activity chargeable to administrative leave. Employees must notify and coordinate with their supervisor regarding the time off needed to obtain the vaccine so that it does not conflict with mission accomplishment or important work center requirements. For clarity, this authorized administrative leave use is for the COVID vaccine only during this current pandemic situation, and only applies to absence for the employee to get vaccinated, not for employee absences to get their family members vaccinated. Time off for other (non-COVID) vaccinations or to take family members to be vaccinated should continue to be requested and coded as sick leave (or annual leave, leave without pay, compensatory time off or earned credit hours).

**Q6. My civilian employee plans to get vaccinated through their private provider, NOT through the DoD. Do they have to take leave to go get vaccinated against COVID-19?**

**A6.** No. DoD civilian employees who wish to get vaccinated through a private provider shall receive the time necessary to obtain the vaccination, generally up to 4 hours per vaccination event. This includes the time spent traveling to/from and getting vaccinated. They should NOT be charged personal leave, and other statuses (such as on-duty status or weather/safety leave) are not appropriate. Under *usual* circumstances, civilian employees who wish to seek medical treatment from private medical providers, including receiving vaccinations, would be required to request sick leave (or annual leave, leave without pay, compensatory time off or earned credit hours) to cover the period of absence while seeking/receiving medical treatment. However, because of the officially declared state of emergency caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, it is in the interest of the Department of the Air Force for the workforce to be vaccinated as soon as possible; therefore, traveling to/from and receiving the vaccine is an authorized activity chargeable to administrative leave. Employees must notify and coordinate with their supervisor regarding the time off needed to obtain the vaccine so that it does not conflict with mission accomplishment or important work center requirements. For clarity, this authorized administrative leave use is for the COVID vaccine only during this current pandemic situation, and only applies to absence for the employee to get vaccinated, not for employee absences to get their family members vaccinated. Time off for other (non-COVID) vaccinations or to take family members to be vaccinated should continue to be requested and coded as sick leave (or annual leave, leave without pay, compensatory time off or earned credit hours).

**Q7. What if it takes less than 4 hours to get the vaccination? Or if it takes more than 4 hours?**

**A7.** Employees are only authorized the administrative leave to obtain the vaccination, so if it takes less than 4 hours, the employee should only be granted that amount of time it actually took. Additionally, it should generally not require more than 4 hours to obtain the vaccination. However, if there are unusual circumstances (such as extended commuting time to the vaccination site, or extended waiting time at the site), employees may be granted additional administrative leave on a case-by-case basis.

**Q8. What if an employee can only get vaccinated during non-work hours (e.g. an off-shift worker)? Can employees get overtime or compensatory time off for time spent outside of working hours to get vaccinated?**

**A8.** No. If an employee receives their vaccination outside their scheduled work hours, they will not be granted overtime pay or compensatory time off. Commanders are encouraged to provide shift workers with opportunities for vaccination through the DoD (for example, offering off-shift operating hours of MTF vaccination clinics), or to consider other options to provide employees vaccination opportunities.

**Q9. What time and attendance code should be used to document administrative leave used for a COVID-19 vaccination event?**

**A9.** As a workaround, the code for physical fitness should be used; specifically “LN” for administrative leave and the environmental/hazard/other subcode of “PF”.

**Q10. If full vaccination requires an employee to receive two doses at two separate vaccination events, will the employee be granted four hours of administrative leave for each vaccination event?**

**A10.** Yes. If an employee’s vaccination requires two events, up to four hours of administrative leave will be granted for each event.

**Q11. If an employee is unable to receive the vaccine when they arrive for their appointment, are they eligible to receive additional administrative leave for a rescheduled appointment?**

**A11.** Yes, at the supervisor’s discretion. Generally, an employee will require no more than two vaccination events and will be granted no more than four hours of administrative leave to cover each vaccination event. However, a supervisor may grant additional administrative leave as needed for extenuating circumstances. If, for some reason, an employee is unable to receive their vaccine after traveling to the vaccination location, the supervisor has discretionary authority to grant additional administrative leave for that time.

**Q12. Will employees be reimbursed for travel expenses if they must travel to a vaccination site outside of the normal commuting area?**

**A12.** No. Employees will not be reimbursed for travel-related expenses while on administrative leave to attend vaccination events.

**Q13. My employee’s vaccination appointment is scheduled during a time when I am unable to release her from performing her duties. Can I deny the employee’s use of administrative leave for a scheduled vaccination appointment?**

**A13.** Yes. As with other types of leave, including sick leave, approval of a request for leave for a nonemergency appointment is contingent upon whether or not mission requirements will allow

for an employee's absence from the workplace and if the employee scheduled the vaccination appointment in advance. However, supervisors should keep in mind that getting the workforce vaccinated as soon as possible is a high priority of the DAF and vaccine appointments can be difficult to reschedule. Moreover, 2<sup>nd</sup> doses medically must be administered within specified time frames after the 1<sup>st</sup> dose. Consequently, Commanders should only disapprove time off for the 2<sup>nd</sup> dose under truly mission critical circumstances.

**Q14. What if an employee used personal leave to get vaccinated before we began granting administrative leave to receive the COVID-19 vaccination. Can employees use administrative leave retroactively?**

**A14.** No. Administrative leave cannot be granted retroactively in lieu of personal leave already taken for prior vaccination events.

**Q15. What if an employee experiences side effects and becomes ill after receiving the vaccine, either through the DoD while in an on-duty status, or through their private provider while on administrative leave? Will they be authorized administrative leave for the period of illness?**

**A15.** No. If, after getting vaccinated, an employee experiences symptoms/side effects to the extent they feel ill and cannot report to work, they should request sick leave for the period of the illness. If an employee does not have sick leave available, they may request advanced sick leave, annual leave, leave without pay, previously earned compensatory time off or credit hours to cover the period of the absence. Again, administrative leave or weather/safety leave are not appropriate for this purpose.

**Q16. If an employee receives the vaccine while on administrative leave, and they experience side effects and become ill after receiving the vaccine, would their illness be covered through Workers' Compensation/OWCP?**

**A16.** If an employee believes their illness resulted from a work-related incident (e.g. receiving the vaccine), they may file a workers' compensation claim under the Federal Employees' Compensation Act (FECA). The employee should report the illness to their supervisor as soon as possible and the supervisor should inform the employee to electronically file a form CA-1, Notice of Traumatic Injury, via the U.S. Department of Labor's ECOMP system. Supervisors are responsible for reporting the incident to the AFPC Injury Compensation Branch (DP1TC) as well as requesting a CA-16, Authorization for Exam and/or Treatment, via email at [injury.compensation@us.af.mil](mailto:injury.compensation@us.af.mil) as soon as possible, but no later than 7 calendar days from the date of the injury. Employees are reminded that their incident must meet all the normal requirements for claim acceptance and that claims are adjudicated by the Department of Labor.

**Q17. I have an employee who I believe is in an occupation that requires them to keep their immunizations current. How can I confirm whether this is accurate and if so, is the COVID-19 vaccine included in that requirement?**

**A17.** Even if your employee falls under an occupation where immunizations are required, the COVID-19 vaccination is still voluntary at this time because the vaccines approved thus far have only received an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) from the FDA. Some Federal employees in certain occupations may have immunizations required as a condition of employment. (Typically such positions include medical personnel, Child Development/Youth Center workers, and some other occupations with risk of occupational exposure to contagious diseases.) You should contact your servicing Civilian Personnel Section (CPS) in order to determine whether

your employee's position is one that is designated as requiring current vaccinations as a condition of employment.

**Q18. In order to ensure all available doses of vaccine are used, our Commander has asked for lists of volunteers who want to receive the vaccine whenever a dose is available. However, I am concerned about private and/or medical information being gathered/maintained. Should that information be gathered/maintained and am I required to provide it?**

**A18.** The servicing medical staff may have requirements to request/report certain data in conjunction with the administration of the vaccines. (For example, the vaccine may be contraindicated for people with certain underlying medical conditions.) Commanders should consult with their servicing MTFs regarding any information needed for this purpose and must ensure that required information is collected/maintained in accordance with the Rehabilitation Act and applicable privacy and/or HIPAA guidelines. No one other than authorized medical personnel should collect or maintain specific medical information. Commanders are strongly encouraged to consult with their servicing MTF, Legal, and CPS offices prior to collecting any such information.

**Q19. Where do supervisors or Commanders go if they have additional questions about vaccinating civilian employees?**

**A19.** Commanders or supervisors should consult their servicing CPS (Employee Relations), MTF, and/or Legal offices if they have additional questions.