



**OFFICE OF GOVERNOR ANDY BESHEAR**  
COMMONWEALTH OF KENTUCKY

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Eleven Hospital Systems in Kentucky to Require  
Vaccinations for Health Care Workforce**

*Yesterday, Gov. Beshear announced 2,583 COVID-19 cases, 10.08% test positivity rate*

**FRANKFORT, Ky. (Aug. 5, 2021)** – On Thursday during his weekly Team Kentucky update, Gov. Andy Beshear said hospital executives from 11 health care systems in the commonwealth are announcing the following pledge:

**“The health care facilities below are committed to the health and safety of our patients and employees. In support of this commitment, we will all require our health care workforce to initiate a complete COVID-19 vaccination series no later than Sept. 15, 2021.”**

The new policy will help health systems respond to a surge in COVID-19 cases driven by the delta variant. Yesterday, the Governor [announced](#) 2,583 new cases (the highest since Feb. 3, 2021) and a 10.08% test positivity rate (the highest since Jan. 24, 2021).

“We have an opportunity for more prosperity, more potential than ever before in my lifetime. We can have the Kentucky that we have always dreamed of. We have that potential at our fingertips,” said Gov. Beshear. “But if we are truly going to realize that opportunity, we must win our war against COVID. If we are going to defeat and not just delay COVID-19, there is one and only one answer. That answer is vaccinations. So each decision that we make has to gauge the impact on getting the unvaccinated to take that shot.”

The health care systems adding this vaccine requirement for staff include: Appalachian Regional Healthcare (ARH), Baptist Health, CHI Saint Joseph Health, King’s Daughters Health System, Med Center Health, Norton Healthcare, Pikeville Medical Center, St. Claire Healthcare, St. Elizabeth Healthcare, UK Healthcare and UofL Health.

In a joint statement, the **Kentucky Hospital Association, Kentucky Medical Association** and the **Kentucky Nurses Association** said: “KHA, KMA and KNA support hospitals and health systems amending their existing vaccine policies to require COVID-19 vaccines for their health care employees. Vaccination against COVID-19 is our best tool to prevent spread of the disease, protect our patients and ensure the health and well-being of our hospital workforce and all Kentuckians. We recognize that each hospital and health system is unique and encourage each hospital and health system to determine the appropriate timeline to implement a requirement.”

Executives from each of the 11 health care systems explained why the pledge was necessary in this stage of the fight against COVID-19.

“Despite COVID-19 vaccination education and outreach efforts, the communities we serve, including our ARH health care staff, have not yet reached a critical mass of vaccination to provide sufficient protection for the unvaccinated. We are seeing an alarming rapid increase in COVID-19 delta variant cases in our service area. For these reasons, and in support of our mission to provide a safe work environment for our staff and a safe place of care for our patients, ARH will now require all employees, providers, students, volunteers, vendors and contractors who work within ARH locations in Kentucky and West Virginia to receive full COVID-19 vaccination,” said **Hollie Harris Phillips**, president and chief executive officer, **Appalachian Regional Healthcare**.

“We must lead by example by requiring that all Baptist Health employees are fully vaccinated. It is the ethical and responsible thing to do to live our mission of improving the health care of the communities that we serve,” said **Gerard Colman**, chief executive officer, **Baptist Health**.

“During times of a public health crisis, there is no greater priority than to ensure the safety of each other, and for those who rely on us for safe care, often when they are most vulnerable. We stand united with Gov. Beshear and other health systems across Kentucky to set an example for the citizens of the commonwealth, so that we may all move past this pandemic together,” said **Anthony A. Houston, Ed.D., FACHE**, market chief executive officer, **CHI Saint Joseph Health**.

“As a health care provider, it is very important we take every possible step to safely care for our patients and families. We firmly believe being fully vaccinated from COVID is essential to protect our patients, team members and people in the community that cannot be vaccinated, in particular children under 12 years old,” said **Kristie Whitlatch**, president and chief executive officer of **King’s Daughters Health System (KDHS)**, who was unable to attend the press conference in person, but signed the pledge on behalf of KDHS.

“I’m encouraged by the increasing number of health care systems and other employers outside of health care now requiring COVID-19 vaccines. The vaccination rate must go up as we fight together to end this pandemic – lives literally depend on it,” said **Connie Smith**, president and chief executive officer, **Med Center Health**.

“This delta variant has created a dire circumstance for us, and we need to be proactive for our community. We all chose a career in health care because we’re willing to serve others. This is a time when we can serve our patients, our families, our coworkers and our entire community by protecting ourselves as much as possible, which in turn protects others. This vaccine is the way we can do exactly that,” said **Russ Cox**, president and chief executive officer of **Norton Healthcare** (via [video](#)).

“Thank you, Gov. Beshear and Dr. Stack, for your leadership in this unprecedented time. I am honored today to be here with my colleagues in this monumental step forward in defeating this virus. Just a month ago I had three COVID patients and only one in the ICU. As of this morning, I had 43 patients in

the hospital. Over a third of them are in the ICU fighting for their life. Vaccines are necessary if we are going to win the fight,” said **Donovan Blackburn**, president and chief executive officer, **Pikeville Medical Center**.

“This opportunity to collaborate with health systems across the commonwealth is not only a good outcome for our staff and patients it is, in my view, a demonstration of our collective commitment to safety, accountability, and in keeping with our moral and ethical obligation to do no harm,” **Donald H. Lloyd II**, president and chief executive officer, **St. Claire Healthcare**.

“With the onset of the new, highly contagious delta variant and recent surges in COVID cases in our facilities and in our communities, we must ensure that all of our associates are protected. We must do our part to keep our patients and communities safe. As health care providers, we must lead by example in creating the safest environment possible for all those we serve, and vaccines provide the strongest protection against the virus by reducing and preventing the spread among patients and peers,” **Gary Blank**, executive vice president and chief operating officer, **St. Elizabeth Healthcare**.

“For many of us in medicine, we remember the day that the vaccine became available. It was a huge relief, even amongst the surge that we were having at that time. I think I even described it as the beginning of the end of COVID. Then and now, our best weapon is the vaccine if we want to see an end to this pandemic. However, for us to see that end, we have to work together. Hopefully that reinforces to everyone that the vaccine is safe and effective, and we hope encourages everyone in the commonwealth to think about how they can move forward,” said **Mark Newman, MD**, executive vice president of health affairs, **UK HealthCare**.

“Vaccinations are an essential tool in protecting our health care heroes so they will be healthy and ready to help when you need them. While UofL Health was first to announce vaccine requirements in Kentucky, it is now the collective commitment that truly reflects the strength of health care in our commonwealth,” said **Tom Miller**, chief executive officer, **UofL Health**.

### **COVID-19 Update**

Dr. Steven Stack, commissioner of the Kentucky Department for Public Health, said from March 1 to Aug. 4, 2021, 92.3% of COVID-19 cases, 91.4% of COVID-

19 hospitalizations and 88.7% of COVID-19 deaths were among partially vaccinated or unvaccinated Kentuckians.

In June, there were 1,197 COVID-19 cases among Kentuckians ages 12-18, and 534 cases among Kentucky children under age 12. In July, those numbers both spiked significantly: there were 4,165 cases reported for the 12 to 18 age group and 2,092 cases reported in Kentucky children under 12.

“The delta variant is serious. You need to take precautions. The measures that we did last year and the ones that we still have to rely on now work,” said Dr. Stack. “Vaccines are the exit strategy. Vaccines are how we bolster our immune systems to protect ourselves and others from this disease. Vaccines are the ways we don’t have to rely on masks and space and rigid adherence to hygiene to keep ourselves safe and protected from this terrible disease.”

The Governor encouraged all Kentuckians 12 and older to get a safe and effective COVID-19 vaccine and then sign up for a chance to win \$1 million or a full college scholarship at [ShotAtAMillion.ky.gov](https://ShotAtAMillion.ky.gov). Two \$1 million winners and 10 full-scholarship winners were announced on [July 2](#) and [July 30](#). On Aug. 27, another \$1 million winner and five more full-scholarship winners will be announced.

So far, more than 780,000 vaccinated Kentuckians have signed up for the \$1 million drawing and nearly 46,000 vaccinated youth have signed up for the full scholarship drawing. Since the *Shot at a Million* incentive program was announced, 268,550 Kentuckians received at least their first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine.

### **Executive Branch State Employee Vaccine Incentives**

The Governor said starting in January, when COVID-19 vaccines started to become more readily available, his administration allowed all Executive Branch employees up to two hours of scheduled work time to take each of the COVID-19 vaccines – with prior supervisory approval. Additionally, Executive Branch employees are able to receive up to 7.5/8 hours of leave for recuperation from any side effects that may occur.

Today, Gov. Beshear added a new incentive to encourage some state employees to get vaccinated: Active, permanent, full and part-time Executive Branch employees will be awarded one additional day of annual leave upon submission of proof of receiving a COVID-19 vaccination (or first dose in a series) on or since

Dec. 1, 2020. Any constitutional office that would like to participate in this initiative should submit a request to the Personnel Cabinet.

“Your state government does critical, even life-saving work – things like inspecting bridges, preventing child abuse, protecting health care and the right to vote and increasing the number of good jobs in the commonwealth that help our people put food on the table for their families,” said Gov. Beshear. “To keep the services in place that we provide to help Kentuckians, we need to get more people vaccinated.”

### **Kentucky’s Economic Momentum Continues to Build**

Lt. Gov. Jacqueline Coleman highlighted four major economic development projects in the commonwealth announced in the past week. In 2021, companies have announced more than 60 projects totaling more than \$2.6 billion in investments and creating 5,500 jobs.

“Kentucky’s economy has been on fire and that momentum continued this week,” said Lt. Gov. Coleman. “We are building an economy and workforce of the future by investing in our children’s education and combining that with the innovation and dedication of these companies.”

- **Firestone Industrial Products Whitley County Expansion:** On Monday, Gov. Beshear joined executives from Firestone Industrial Products Co. LLC and local officials to break ground on the company’s 250-job expansion in Williamsburg, a project that includes a more than \$50 million investment to increase production of automotive air springs in support of the burgeoning electric vehicle market. To learn more, see the [full release](#).
- **Pennington Stave & Cooperage Building Upgrades in Metcalfe County:** On Tuesday, Gov. Beshear announced a \$616,900 grant for improvements at a building in the Metcalfe County Industrial Park that will house Pennington Stave & Cooperage LLC (PS&C, LLC). The company will manufacture staves and barrels for bourbon and whiskey production, building on positive momentum in the growing spirits industry in the commonwealth. PS&C LLC will invest \$3.5 million in new equipment and create 60 jobs with above-average wages for Kentuckians in the Metcalfe County area. To learn more, see the [full release](#).
- **R.A. Jones:** On Wednesday, Gov. Beshear announced R.A. Jones & Co., a designer and manufacturer of packaging equipment, will upgrade its Kenton County facility with a more than \$2 million investment that will create 20 high-wage jobs. To learn more, see the [full release](#).

- **WellCare of Kentucky:** Today, Gov. Beshear announced WellCare of Kentucky, a Medicaid and Medicare services provider, is adding 18 full-time jobs at its national call center in Hazard, nearly doubling employment at the facility. The Eastern Kentucky facility was selected for the expansion over call centers in Nashville, Tenn., San Antonio, Texas, and Tempe, Ariz. Including the new positions, WellCare’s call center will infuse over \$1.6 million in wages annually into the community. To learn more, see the [full release](#).

### **Team Kentucky All-Stars**

On July 30, there was a severe storm in Nicholas County that caused historic flooding. There was more rainfall in 110 minutes in this area than there typically is in the entire month of July. The flooding caused multiple road closures, flooded streets and vehicles, destroyed approximately 80 homes and 30 businesses and caused at least \$1.5 million in infrastructure damage. Tragically, one resident drowned in the flood.

“The damage from this flood is staggering. But this community is not backing down. Instead, folks are coming together to help one another get through this and rebuild,” the Governor said. “They are this week’s Team Kentucky All-Stars. I want to thank first responders, health care workers, emergency management personnel and every Kentuckian in Nicholas County who has stepped up to be their brother and sister’s keeper. All of Team Kentucky is with you.”

On Tuesday, Gov. Beshear [issued](#) a state of emergency to unlock more resources for assistance. He also sent a letter to President Joe Biden requesting that the Federal Emergency Management Agency conduct Joint Preliminary Damage Assessments in Nicholas County.

Gov. Beshear and Lt. Gov. Coleman visited the community to tour the damage and meet Kentuckians working together to help their neighbors. To learn more, see the [full release](#).

Yesterday, Gov. Beshear announced that a multiagency recovery center will open this week to assist impacted Nicholas County residents. To learn more, see the [full release](#).

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