

## Questions & Answers: Vaccine Verification Requirement in King County

Updated 09.16.21, 3:30 pm

This document covers common questions and answers about the Local Health Officer Order requiring vaccine verification in King County. This does not preclude employers from making their own vaccination verification mandates in their place of business and for their employees.

### General Information About the Policy

#### **What will be required for customers and patrons at public indoor activities and large outdoor events?**

People aged 12 and older will be required to show proof of vaccine or negative COVID test to enter certain large sporting/entertainment events and gyms, and to take part in indoor dining at establishments such as restaurants and bars. This health order does not require people to also show proof of ID.

#### **Why is this policy necessary?**

COVID-19 is currently spreading at high rates in King County, driven by the highly contagious Delta variant. Our healthcare system is more strained than at any time during the pandemic, and we are trying to preserve the ability of our hospitals to serve everyone who needs care.

Requiring people to verify their vaccination status in places where there is higher risk of exposure to COVID-19 will help contain the spread since vaccinated people are at much lower risk of catching and spreading COVID-19. COVID-19 is more likely to spread in crowded outdoor spaces and indoor settings where people are unmasked or participating in high-risk activities like yelling, singing, or aerobic activity.

This policy aims to prevent cases and hospitalizations from rising any further and therefore prevent further state restrictions, such as business capacity limits or a return to remote schooling.

For data from the UW Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation on the potential for this policy to prevent cases, hospitalizations, and death: <https://www.healthdata.org/node/9029>

#### **When will this policy be in place and how long will it last?**

This Local Health Officer Order is effective starting October 25, 2021. Small restaurants and bars, defined as those with seating capacity for less than 12 people, have until December 6, 2021, to implement the requirements.

The entire order is not expected to be permanent. No later than six months from October 25, 2021, this policy will be reviewed for possible extension based on future outbreak conditions.

#### **How will this policy be enforced?**

As with other Public Health orders, King County will focus on education and outreach to support people in following the health order. If there are complaints of serious instances of patrons or businesses not following the order, County officials will contact businesses and event organizers and take action as feasible.

King County is working to develop a process for submitting complaints, defining egregious or serious non-compliance, and building a compliance plan into event permit applications.

### **Can we stop wearing masks in places that require vaccine verification?**

No, the mask mandate will still be in effect. Verification requirement is an additional layer of protection on top of masks, distancing, and ventilation.

### About Proof of Vaccination

#### **What can you use to as proof of vaccination?**

- CDC COVID-19 vaccine record card or photo of vaccine card
- Printed certificate or QR code (available at the end of September) from [MyIRMobile.com](https://myirmobile.com)
- Other official immunization record from within or outside the U.S., including from your health care provider. A photo or photocopy of this card is also acceptable.

**NOTE:** Documentation of medical or religious exemptions **not** accepted

#### **What can people do if they have questions or concerns about their vaccination record on MyIRMobile.com?**

MyIR (My Immunization Record) is an internet-based service that gives people access to their official Washington state vaccination records. It is managed by the Washington State Department of Health. To set up an account, go to [www.MyIRMobile.com](https://www.MyIRMobile.com). For language assistance, or additional help getting your records, call the Washington State Vaccine Helpline at 1-833-829-4357 or email [WAISSRecords@doh.wa.gov](mailto:WAISSRecords@doh.wa.gov).

#### **Do children need to show proof of vaccination?**

No, the requirements do not apply to children under 12 years old.

#### **Will there be an alternative testing option? What about people with personal or religious objections?**

If you are unvaccinated or cannot prove vaccine status, then you must show proof of a negative PCR COVID-19 test done in the last 72 hours, or a rapid test result from a test performed by a testing provider on site at the event just prior to entry.

You will need to show print or digital documentation of your test results from a pharmacy, laboratory, or testing provider.

#### **Will religious or medical exemptions be accepted in lieu of proof of vaccination?**

No, businesses should not have to make a distinction between religious or medical exemptions. Rather, a negative test can be accepted as an alternative to proof of vaccination.

#### **What about fake vaccination cards?**

Showing a fake vaccination card is a federal crime. We expect that the vast majority of people will follow the requirements.

#### **Why aren't you requiring people to show ID at the same time as proof of vaccination?**

In our stakeholder engagement, we received feedback that ID checks are associated with trauma stemming from racist and discriminatory practices, plus can lead to distrust for many communities. The vast majority of people have followed health requirements in our region during the pandemic.

## What the Policy Covers

### **Will this include private events (such as weddings or parties) or faith-based events?**

If a wedding or party is held at a business that is otherwise subject to this rule, such as a restaurant or music venue, vaccine verification will be required.

Weddings or events held in settings that are not otherwise subject to this policy – such as private homes, or faith-based institutions – are strongly encouraged but not required to verify vaccinations.

Faith-based settings and large funerals are strongly encouraged but not required to verify vaccinations.

### **Will this apply to employees as well as patrons?**

Workers are covered under Occupational Health and Safety Administration regulations and Washington State Department of Labor and Industries regulations related to Covid safety. The King County policy strongly recommends, but does not require, a vaccine mandate for all workers or volunteers at establishments covered under the policy. Employers can mandate vaccinations.

In addition, the federal government has announced they are issuing a new policy that requires employers with more than 100 employees to either put in place an employee vaccination mandate or conduct weekly COVID-19 testing of employees.

Guidance and resources from the Washington Department of Labor & Industries, Washington State Coronavirus Response, and U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission are available here:

- <https://lni.wa.gov/agency/outreach/coronavirus-covid-19-vaccines-and-paid-sick-leave-common-questions>
- <https://www.coronavirus.wa.gov/>
- <https://www.eeoc.gov/wysk/what-you-should-know-about-covid-19-and-ada-rehabilitation-act-and-other-eeo-laws>

### **Does the policy apply to outdoor dining, take-out, or food courts?**

No. Outdoor dining and take-out customers do not need to show proof of vaccination or a negative test. The policy also does not apply in settings that are not primarily used as indoor dining locations, such as grocery stores. The policy applies to restaurants, bars and coffee shops with dedicated seating. It does not apply to food courts or airports.

### **Does it apply if I have to dash in to a restaurant to pick up an order or use the restroom?**

No.

### **Are fast food restaurants included?**

Fast food restaurants are included IF they offer indoor seating and patrons are choosing to dine inside the restaurant.

**Are middle school and high school sporting events included in this order?**

No, school guidance is covered by the Washington State Department of Health and the Covid guidelines provided to schools by DOH. <https://www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/1600/coronavirus/820-201-SportsFitnessGuidance.pdf>

**Are employer cafeterias or school cafeterias covered under this order?**

No.

**What type of fitness spaces are included?**

In addition to gyms, indoor fitness spaces where groups of people are engaging together in indoor exercise are included. Examples of spaces covered under the order are gyms, dance studios, studios or spaces offering activities like yoga and martial arts. This is not an exhaustive list.

**What are examples of an entertainment space?**

Examples of entertainment spaces include indoor movie theaters, stage productions, music venues, and escape rooms. This is not an exhaustive list.

**What is defined as a recreational space?**

Recreational space includes indoor activities such as bowling alleys, laser tag, indoor soccer spaces, and recreational game centers. This is not an exhaustive list.

**Are retail shops covered under this order?**

No. In most instances, retail shops have more opportunities for distancing and keeping masks on, and they often have multiple entry points which make vaccination verification less feasible.

**Are outdoor street fairs, night markets and farmers markets covered under this order?**

No, there is no requirement for vaccination or testing for these outdoor events.

**Are grocery and large retail stores covered under this order?**

No, grocery stores, and other large retail stores offering groceries, are not required to obtain vaccine verification in this order.

**Why are faith-based institutions excluded from the order?**

Feedback from stakeholders has indicated that for people of faith, the attendance at events in their place of worship is a necessity and doesn't fall into the entertainment, recreation, or dining categories. We strongly recommend that faith institutions require vaccination verification.

**Will this order apply to people under 12 years of age once they are eligible for vaccine?**

It may be several months before vaccines are approved for younger children and they have sufficient opportunity for vaccination. Depending on the circumstances, the order could be amended at a later date to include additional groups.

## Additional Information for Businesses

### **Do businesses have to track people's vaccinations?**

No, businesses do not need to keep track of people's proofs of vaccination or test results.

### **What kinds of establishments are eligible for the later phase-in of the policy that starts December 6, 2021?**

Only restaurants and bars with a seating capacity of 12 people or less are eligible for the later phase-in date. Gyms, music venues and other establishments are not eligible.

### **Why are smaller restaurants and bars being phased in at a later date?**

As part of our stakeholder feedback process, we heard that small restaurants face special challenges in implementing new policies. The policy is designed to give these restaurants and bars extra time to come into compliance if needed, though we will be working with them in our outreach to assist them in implementing as soon as possible.

### **Why are "small restaurants" defined as those having a capacity limit of 12?**

We chose 12 as the capacity limit for restaurants to be considered "small" because this is the capacity limit used to define "small" restaurants as part of King County's food service permits.

### **What kind of outreach and support to businesses are you providing as part of this policy?**

Public Health will be working with partners to provide technical support and educational materials to businesses and organizations implementing the order.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION:** [www.kingcounty.gov/verify](http://www.kingcounty.gov/verify)