

14 March 2022

Department of the Air Force Mandatory COVID-19 Vaccine Implementation

Frequently Asked Questions

GENERAL

On August 23, 2021 the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) formally licensed the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine, now marketed as Comirnaty. On August 24, 2021 the Secretary of Defense, the Honorable Lloyd J. Austin III, issued a memorandum mandating all Department of Defense Service members be vaccinated against COVID-19. To comply with the mandate, Service members may elect to receive any COVID-19 vaccine that is FDA-approved, has an FDA Emergency Use Authorization (EUA), or is on the World Health Organization (WHO) Emergency Use Listing (EUL). Service members may only be compelled to take FDA-approved vaccines. Currently, Comirnaty (Pfizer) and Spikevax (Moderna) are FDA-approved.

Service members who refuse to comply with the COVID-19 vaccination mandate may be punished under the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ). Prior to receiving the COVID-19 vaccine, Department of the Air Force (DAF) Service members will have access to healthcare providers and chaplains to address questions or concerns with COVID-19 vaccination. DAF commanders are advised to consult with their servicing Staff Judge Advocate office for additional guidance on addressing vaccination mandate non-compliance. Medically related exemptions from mandatory vaccinations may be requested in accordance with (IAW) Air Force Instruction (AFI) 48-110 IP. Religious accommodations may be requested IAW Department of the Air Force Instruction (DAFI) 52-201. Pursuant to DAF and DoD policy, approved exemptions may be modified or rescinded if mission needs dictate.

Unit vaccination data will be tracked and monitored in the Aeromedical Services Information Management System (ASIMS) with weekly reporting through command channels to the Office of the Secretary of Defense.

REFERENCES

Secretary of Defense Memorandum, *Mandatory Coronavirus Disease 2019 Vaccination of Department of Defense Service Members* (August 24, 2021)

AFI 48-110 IP, Immunizations and Chemoprophylaxis for the Prevention of Infectious Diseases

DAFI 52-201, Religious Freedom in the Department of the Air Force

Secretary of the Air Force Memorandum, *Mandatory Coronavirus Disease 2019 Vaccination of Department of the Air Force Military Members* (September 3, 2021)

Secretary of the Air Force Memorandum, *Coronavirus Disease 2019 Vaccination for Members of the National Guard and the Ready Reserve* (November 30, 2021)

Secretary of the Air Force Memorandum, *Supplemental Coronavirus Disease 2019 Vaccination Policy* (December 7, 2021)

Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness Memorandum, *Force Health Protection Guidance (Supplement 23) Revision 3 -DoD Guidance for Coronavirus Disease 2019 Vaccination Attestation, Screening Testing, and Vaccination Verification* (December 20, 2021)

PERSONNEL

- 1) Will I be discharged if I refuse to take the vaccine?

Commanders will take appropriate administrative and disciplinary actions consistent with federal law and DAF policy in addressing Service members who refuse to obey a lawful order to receive the COVID-19 vaccine and do not have a pending separation or retirement, or medical, religious or administrative exemption. Refusal to comply with the vaccination mandate without an exemption will result in the member being subject to initiation of administrative discharge proceedings pursuant to SecAF memorandum, *Supplemental Coronavirus Disease 2019 Vaccination Policy*, December 7, 2021. Service characterization will be governed by the applicable DAF Instructions.

- 2) Can I choose to apply to separate or retire instead of taking the COVID-19 vaccine?

Unvaccinated regular Airmen and Guardians who submitted a request to retire or separate prior to 2 November 2021, with a retirement or separation date on or before 1 April 2022, may be granted an administrative exemption from the COVID-19 vaccination requirement until their retirement or separation date. Requests to retire and separate are processed and approved/disapproved IAW applicable Air Force Instructions and other regulations.

Similarly, unvaccinated regular Airmen and Guardians whose requests for medical, religious, or administrative exemptions are denied may, consistent with the opportunities afforded Service members prior to 2 November 2021, submit a request to separate or retire on or before 1 April 2022, or no later than the first day of the fifth month following initial or final appeal denial. Those Airmen and Guardians may be granted an administrative exemption from the COVID-19 vaccination requirement until their retirement or separation date. Requests to retire and separate are processed and approved/disapproved IAW applicable Air Force Instructions and other regulations.

- 3) What happens if my exemption request is denied?

Service members with a request for medical, religious, or administrative exemption will be temporarily exempt from the COVID-19 vaccination requirement while their exemption request is under review. Service members who receive a denial of their medical, religious, or administrative exemption request have five (5) calendar days to begin a COVID-19 vaccination regimen, request an appeal, second opinion (medical exemptions), or initiate a request to retire/separate (AFR members cannot initiate a separation request but rather be involuntary reassigned to IRR).

- 4) If I have an Active Duty Service Commitment, will it be waived if I choose to separate or retire instead of taking the COVID-19 vaccine?

No. Active Duty Service Commitment waivers will not be automatically granted; however, Airmen and Guardians may, in accordance with AFI 36-3203, Service Retirements, paragraph 3.8., "Waiver of Restrictions," request an Active Duty Service Commitment waiver in conjunction with their retirement or separation application.

- 5) I have an approved retirement or separation date that is beyond 1 April 2022, and I do not want to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. Can I adjust my retirement or separation date instead of taking the COVID-19 vaccine?

Regular [Active component] Airmen and Guardians may request to adjust their approved retirement or separation date to be effective NLT 1 April 2022 (the first day of the fifth month following the COVID-19 mandatory vaccination date of 2 November 2021).

- 6) If my retirement or separation request is denied, will I have to get the COVID-19 vaccine?

Yes, pursuant to the 24 August 2021 Secretary of Defense memorandum, the subsequent 3 September 2021 Secretary of the Air Force memorandum, and subsequent DAF implementation guidance.

- 7) If I have applied for retirement or separation in lieu of receiving the COVID-19 vaccine, or have requested a medical or religious exemption, will I still be allowed access to my installation and workplace while my application or request is being processed?

Commanders and directors may permit Service members who are not fully vaccinated access to the installation and the workplace in accordance with the screening and testing requirements of Force Health Protection (FHP) Guidance 23 (and subsequent revisions), and applicable DAF policies.

- 8) I'm currently on terminal leave, will I be required to take the vaccine?

Members on terminal leave will not be required to take the vaccine; however, if recalled to active duty, the member will be required to take the vaccine.

- 9) Will I be allowed to reenlist or extend my current enlistment if I refuse to take the vaccine?

Reenlistment is a command prerogative and a commander may take into account vaccination status in making that determination.

- 10) If discharge is premised on the refusal to follow the order to take the vaccine, will the DAF owe me involuntary separation pay?

No. The Air Force or Space Force will not owe you separation pay.

- 11) Do I need to repay bonuses/education if I refuse to take vaccine?

If an Active Duty Service Commitment (ADSC) was incurred as a result of educational opportunities, and it was not completed before any potential separation or discharge, then the service may seek to recoup any associated funding or payments.

- 12) Will I be denied PCS/TDY or Formal School opportunities if I refuse to take the vaccine?

Airmen who are not fully vaccinated against COVID-19, including those awaiting final decision on a medical exemption or religious accommodation, are restricted from proceeding on existing PCS orders and are also restricted from being selected for a future PCS. A member with an approved medical exemption or approved religious accommodation is not restricted from receiving PCS orders. If it is not practicable or is unrelated to the expression of a religious belief, commanders may deny TDY or formal school opportunities for Service members who are not fully vaccinated.

- 13) Can I be pulled from training if I refuse the vaccine?

Service members who are not fully vaccinated against COVID-19, including those awaiting final decision on a medical exemption or religious accommodation, may be removed from training based on local policies or mission requirements. To the extent practicable, a member with an approved medical exemption or approved religious accommodation is not restricted from training.

- 14) I'm requesting a Mandatory Separation Date (MSD) waiver. Will it be denied if I don't take the vaccine?

Failing to maintain retention and/or readiness standards could result in denial of an MSD waiver request.

OPERATIONS

- 15) Why do I have to take the vaccine? Won't those with exemptions also affect readiness?

COVID-19 vaccines have proven to be safe and very effective in preventing hospitalizations and deaths. Vaccine requirements are tied to personal medical readiness, and are designed to afford Service members with the best protections available so they can perform missions across the globe. Personnel with approved exemptions will be identified as required in all applicable data systems. Commanders will assess impact to individual and unit level readiness using vaccination status as a key parameter to determine availability to perform mission and ability to meet mission requirements. DAF personnel who are not vaccinated may be non-deployable based on specific mission circumstances. Pursuant to Air Force and DoD policy, approved exemptions may be modified or rescinded if mission needs dictate.

- 16) If I am classified as non-deployable because I am not vaccinated, will I be subject to discharge?

In accordance with DAFMAN 48-123, paragraph 4.2.2.1, mobility status is an ongoing requirement that a Service member is reasonably free from any medical conditions or limitations that would preclude a deployment. In accordance with DoDI 1332.45, paragraph 1.2.b., Service members who are considered non-deployable for more than 12 consecutive months will be evaluated for a retention determination or, as appropriate, referral into the Disability Evaluation System or initiation of processing for administrative separation. Refusal to comply with the vaccination mandate without an exemption will result in the member being subject to initiation of administrative discharge proceedings.

- 17) I'm a flyer. Will there be a grounding or "feet-on-the-ramp" policy if I refuse the vaccine?

All members performing flight or controller duties must maintain medical readiness. Members who are non-compliant with medical standards may face administrative, disciplinary, and flying grounding status actions. These could include Duty Not Involving Flying (DNIF), Duty Not Involving Controlling (DNIC), and Duty Not Involving Alert (DNIA). A member will not automatically be placed in a DNIF/DNIC/DNIA status. Commanders should assess mission requirements before taking these administrative actions.

- 18) Will some AFSCs be allowed to refuse the vaccine if there is a shortage in their career field? Does the "pilot shortage" give me leverage?

No. All Service members, regardless of pay grade and/or career field, are required to be vaccinated. Individual vaccination status in critically manned AFSCs will not be offered as solution to manage career field shortfalls. Members could face administrative or legal actions if they decline to take the vaccine.

MEDICAL

- 19) What if the vaccine on my base is not licensed by the FDA? Can I be forced to be vaccinated?

To comply with the mandate, Service members may elect to receive any COVID-19 vaccine that is FDA-approved, has an FDA Emergency Use Authorization (EUA), or is on the World Health Organization (WHO) Emergency Use Listing (EUL). Service members may only be compelled to take FDA-approved vaccines. Currently, Comirnaty (Pfizer) and Spikevax (Moderna) are FDA-approved.

If supplies are limited, members can choose to get vaccinated on their own or wait for adequate supply at a DoD facility. MTFs will have adequate vaccine supplies to meet the SecAF's vaccination timeline.

- 20) Will vaccine refusal cause me to be DNIF/DNIC/DNIA?

Maybe. All members must maintain medical readiness. Members that are non-compliant with medical standards may face administrative, disciplinary, and flying grounding status actions. These could include Duty Not Involving Flying (DNIF), Duty Not Involving Controlling (DNIC), and Duty Not Involving Alert (DNIA).

A member refusing COVID-19 vaccination will not initially be placed in a grounding status. Before duty, during review of Go/No-Go Items they may be deemed not medically compliant. Also, once designated as "Red" in ASIMS the member may be considered to have failed to maintain medical qualification standards.

21) Are there exemptions for vaccination?

Yes. Much like the annual flu shot, there are medical and administrative exemptions (including religious accommodation exemptions). Airmen and Guardians should consult with their unit commander and local MTF for information on the exemption process. Medical and administrative exemptions are addressed in AFI 48-110 IP, *Immunizations and Chemoprophylaxis for the Prevention of Infectious Diseases*. Religious accommodations are addressed in DAFI 52-201, *Religious Freedom in the Department of the Air Force*.

22) Are there special requirements for personnel with exemptions from the COVID-19 vaccination?

Yes. Service members who are not fully vaccinated must comply with all requirements related to masking, physical distancing, and travel as established in DoD policy. Additionally, Force Health Protection (FHP) Guidance 23 (and subsequent revisions), directs that COVID-19 screening testing is required at least weekly for Service members entering a DoD facility who are not fully vaccinated, including those who have an exemption request under review, or who are exempted from COVID-19 vaccination.

23) If I am “high-risk,” do I have to take the vaccine?

Most “high-risk” medical conditions are suitable for the COVID-19 vaccination. Vaccinations are usually helpful for populations at higher risk for infection and more severe illness complications. Members may consult with their Primary Care Provider (PCP) or supporting MTF/RMU (ARC/ANG) for appropriate plan of vaccination.

24) If I have religious objections, do I have to take the vaccine?

Only Service members with an approved exemption do not have to take the vaccine. Refer to DAFI 52-201 and AFI 48-110 for information on requesting an exemption from the vaccination requirement for reasons of religious accommodation. Members who submit a religious waiver to not receive the vaccination will be exempt from the requirement while their request is pending. Commanders must counsel the requestor after receiving the request that noncompliance with immunization requirements may adversely affect readiness for deployment, assignment, travel, or result in other administrative or disciplinary consequences. Counseling must be documented in a memorandum and included with the religious accommodation request package.

25) If I am pregnant, do I have to take the vaccine?

Pregnant Service members are recommended to receive COVID-19 vaccination consistent with guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG), and the Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine (SMFM); however, a pregnant Service member with concerns about vaccination during pregnancy may pursue a temporary medical exemption following vaccine counseling from her healthcare provider, as per paragraph 2-6.a.(1)(a) of AFI 48-110. There is no data that COVID-19 vaccination is unsafe for members who are pregnant or breastfeeding. Pregnant and breastfeeding members are at higher risk for severe illness or hospitalization from COVID-19 infection.

26) If I am planning to become pregnant, do I have to take the vaccine?

Yes. There is no data that COVID-19 vaccination is unsafe for members who plan to become pregnant. Members considering pregnancy should consult with their specialty care doctor or primary care doctor if they have concerns regarding the COVID-19 vaccination.

27) If I am post-partum but breastfeeding, do I have to take the vaccine?

Yes (unless under medical exemption). There is no data that COVID-19 vaccination is unsafe for members who are pregnant or breastfeeding. Pregnant and breastfeeding members are at higher risk for severe illness or hospitalization from COVID-19 infection. Service members who are breast-feeding should consult their primary care doctor if they have concerns regarding the COVID-19 vaccination.

28) If I've already had COVID-19, do I still need to take the vaccine?

Yes. Vaccinated individuals have significantly lower rates of reinfection and illness than those who have been previously infected but remain unvaccinated. Having had COVID-19 does not mean you are immune to future infections and does not meet the requirement to be vaccinated.

29) If I have a history of allergic reactions to vaccinations, do I have to take the vaccine?

Reactions to other vaccines do not necessarily predict a reaction to COVID-19 vaccines. Those who have had a reaction to a specific COVID-19 vaccine, or one of the ingredients in the vaccine, should not continue receiving that particular vaccine. As medical conditions vary for individuals, members should consult with their primary care providers for special condition concerns.

30) What conditions will allow me to obtain a medical exemption? (also see Question 18)

As medical conditions vary for individuals, members should consult with their primary care providers for special condition concerns.

31) How safe is the vaccine?

COVID-19 vaccines have been thoroughly tested and proven to be safe and very effective in preventing hospitalizations and deaths. As we do with other deadly infections, we want to protect our force through the best tool available, vaccination. Required vaccination to protect the force is routine for DoD, including annual influenza vaccination. The Comirnaty (Pfizer) and Spikevax (Moderna) COVID-19 vaccines are FDA-approved. The Janssen (Johnson & Johnson) COVID-19 has an FDA Emergency Use Authorization (EUA). All three vaccines continue to undergo continuous and intense safety monitoring.

- 32) Will my medical records list accurate information so that if I experience short or long-term adverse events associated with the vaccine, I will be able to receive appropriate health care in the future? Will the government pay for this health care?

Yes. All immunizations are recorded on a DD2766c and kept in the Service member's medical record. Members experiencing adverse effects related to vaccinations or any illness, injury, disease, operative procedure, or hospitalization, are responsible for promptly reporting information to their commander or supervisor and supporting medical facility. If lasting adverse effects are found to be related to vaccination, your medical records will be noted and appropriate care provided. Members of the Air Reserve Component who believe they have suffered adverse effects of a military vaccination should consult their commanders for a line of duty determination to appropriately reflect the source of any purported injury.

- 33) I feel uncomfortable and not safe receiving the vaccine due to the limited amount of knowledge on potential long term effects of the vaccine. Can I be given a waiver until more information is known on the possible future effects?

No. We have a full range of resources – to include individual and professional medical advice – to help Service members understand the safety and effectiveness of the vaccine.

- 34) Can I choose which type of vaccine to take (Pfizer, J&J, Moderna)?

To comply with the mandate, Service members may elect to receive any COVID-19 vaccine that is FDA-approved, has an FDA Emergency Use Authorization (EUA), or is on the World Health Organization (WHO) Emergency Use Listing (EUL). Service members may only be compelled to take FDA-approved vaccines. Currently, Comirnaty (Pfizer) and Spikevax (Moderna) are FDA-approved. The Comirnaty (Pfizer) vaccine has the same formulation as the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine distributed under the EUA and therefore both vaccines can be used interchangeably. Likewise, the Spikevax (Moderna) vaccine has the same formulation as the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine distributed under the EUA and therefore both vaccines can be used interchangeably.

- 35) If I've had a monoclonal antibody preparation or Convalescent Plasma, do I still need to be vaccinated?

Yes. Currently, there is no data on safety or efficacy of COVID-19 vaccination in persons who received monoclonal antibodies or convalescent plasma as part of COVID-19 treatment. The CDC recommends that COVID-19 vaccination be deferred for 90 days after receipt to avoid a possible impact on COVID-19 vaccination by prior antibody treatment. However, providers and patients can consider COVID-19 vaccination in such treated individuals within this 90-day window on a case-by-case basis with shared clinical decision-making for Force Health Protection and other important vaccination needs. (also see Question 22)

- 36) If I was part of the trial vaccination group, do I still need to take the FDA mandated vaccination?

Service members who are actively participating in COVID-19 vaccine clinical trials begun prior to November 22, 2021 are exempted from mandatory vaccination against COVID-19 until the trial is complete in order to avoid invalidating such clinical trial results.

- 37) I am currently awaiting a second dose of the Moderna vaccine. I do not want to take another shot. Will I be required to take the second shot even though it is not currently a mandatory vaccine?

No, but refusing to be fully vaccinated, without a medical exemption or religious accommodation, will be handled the same as if you are unvaccinated.

- 38) What if I lost my CDC vaccination card? Am I required to get the vaccine again?

If a Service member was vaccinated outside of the military health system, and/or their health records do not indicate that they've been vaccinated, they will need to provide proof of vaccination. If they cannot show proof of vaccination either with a CDC card or other vaccination records, they may be required to be vaccinated. It is suggested that members keep a copy of their vaccination documentation in an electronic form such as a picture on their phone or in their email. Service members should get this documentation added to their military health records as soon as possible.

- 39) Can I get titers drawn and be considered current with the vaccine?

No. Titers are considered unreliable and not an FDA approved method to prove immunity to COVID-19. There is NO titer level that is considered to represent immunity from COVID-19.

- 40) Will vaccination be required for TDY or Deployment to other countries?

DoD policy currently restricts unvaccinated personnel to "mission-critical" domestic and international official travel as approved by the Under Secretary of the Air Force. Service members who are not vaccinated may be non-deployable based on country clearance requirements or other specific mission circumstances. Pursuant to DAF and DoD policy, approved vaccination exemptions may be modified or rescinded based on mission requirements.

- 41) Will I require a booster if I have already received the vaccine?

While not mandatory, Service members are encouraged to receive the appropriate COVID-19 vaccination booster in accordance with CDC guidelines. Service members will be granted a four-hour pass to receive the booster.

- 42) Can I request a different type of vaccine based on what I feel will be good for me?

If the medical treatment facility has more than one type of vaccine you may request that vaccine based on availability. If a Service member decides to use a vaccine outside of the military health system, they will need to provide proof of vaccination. Service members should get this documentation added to their military health records as soon as possible.

LOGISTICS

- 43) Do I have to be vaccinated to fly on the Patriot Express? How about other carriers?

With limited exceptions, all Service members are required to be vaccinated. Other travelers aboard the Patriot Express, other government-contracted carriers, or commercial airlines, are not required to be vaccinated at this time. However, passengers must meet point-of-entry vaccination/testing requirements outlined in the Foreign Clearance Guide (e.g. negative PCR test within 72 hours).

- 44) Do I have to be vaccinated to sign up for Space-A travel?

With limited exceptions, all Service members are required to be vaccinated. Due to COVID-19 associated restrictions, only certain categories remain eligible to seek Space-A travel unless an exception is provided. See Table 3 of DoDI 4515.13 Air Transportation Eligibility for more information.

- 45) What if the Comirnaty (Pfizer) or Spikevax (Moderna) COVID-19 vaccines can't be shipped to my base? Can I be asked to take the vaccine while TDY or at Formal School?

Yes. You may be ordered to take the vaccine while on TDY or at a Formal School. In this situation, your Commander would coordinate with the TDY location or school.

- 46) Now that the vaccine is mandatory, will the movers that pack my household goods be required to be vaccinated?

Currently, the Government Contractors supporting the HHGs program are below the monetary threshold, thus exempting them from the vaccine mandate on Government Contractors. US Transportation Command, the DoD Personal Property Program Manager, will publish guidance if or when vaccines become mandatory for Government contracted HHG movers.

LEGAL

- 47) Can my chain-of-command require proof of vaccination?

For Service members, vaccination status is captured in DoD medical health records, which commanders, first sergeants, or a commander's designee can utilize to verify vaccination status. The member's commander, first sergeant, or commander's designee may also ask the member to provide proof of vaccination status in order to effectively accomplish their force health protection mission and implement force health protection policies.

- 48) What administrative actions (LOR, Article 15, referral evaluation, etc.) can my chain-of-command take, if I refuse the mandatory COVID-19 vaccination? How will this be enforced uniformly among units?

Commanders have wide latitude to use the full range of quality force management tools to enforce good order and discipline. Any refusal to receive the COVID-19 vaccine, absent an approved exemption, may be punishable under the Uniform Code of Military Justice.

49) What will happen to my career if I refuse to take the vaccine?

Absent an approved medical or administrative exemption (e.g., religious accommodation), any refusal by a Service member to receive the COVID-19 vaccine may be punishable under the Uniform Code of Military Justice. Refusal to comply with the vaccination mandate without an exemption will result in the member being subject to initiation of administrative discharge proceedings.

50) Who is allowed to ask me if I'm vaccinated?

Commanders, first sergeants, and commander's designees have a need to know if their military members are vaccinated. They may ask their military members and expect a truthful response. If a military member is suspected of misconduct (e.g., being not fully vaccinated), he or she must be advised of their rights under Article 31, UCMJ.

51) If discharged, will it be characterized as Honorable if I refuse the vaccine?

Characterization of service upon discharge is based on the quality of the member's service as reflected in the military record of the current enlistment or period of service including personal conduct, performance of duty, and the reason for separation.

52) How long will I have to decide if I'll get the vaccine before disciplinary action will happen?

Uniformed members are required to obey all lawful orders issued to them, and their actions should be informed by the SecAF's vaccination timeline.

PUBLIC AFFAIRS

53) What mental health, chaplain, first sergeant resources are available to members who find themselves in hardship after vaccine refusal?

Commanders should proactively make available chaplains and first sergeants and the opportunity to consult with an Area Defense Counsel for members who initially refuse to be vaccinated. Additionally, during any period that mandatory vaccinations are taking place, commanders will ensure that mental health professionals are on-call and available to support.

54) FDA licensed COVID-19 vaccines have become mandatory. They're labeled a "commander's program" and affect unit readiness. Is the acceptance rate a reflection of leadership ability? Will military providers be as likely to report adverse reactions or declinations?

As vaccination is now mandatory, commanders are tasked with maintaining the medical readiness of their unit. Adverse reactions are reported directly by the member in VAERS. They will also be entered into military health records.

- 55) Are unvaccinated members required to wear a mask and/or participate in screening testing?

Masking and screening testing are an important part of community safety and health protection. All personnel are required to comply with DoD masking and screening policies, in accordance with DoD Force Health Protection Guidance (FHPG). As conditions change, DoD FHPG will be updated.

- 56) Will all new recruits be given the vaccine upon entry into the service?

Yes. All new recruits will be vaccinated through entry-level in-processing (BMT, OTS, etc.).

TOTAL FORCE (Specific)

- 57) What happens if I am in the Air Reserve Component and my exemption request is denied?

Air Reserve Component members whose medical exemption or religious accommodation request is denied have five (5) calendar days, from receipt of their denial, to do one of the following: 1) Begin a COVID-19 vaccination regimen; 2) Request a second opinion (medical); 3) Submit an appeal to the final religious accommodation request appeal authority (AF/SG); or retire / separate (if eligible).

- 58) Can I choose to separate or retire instead of taking the COVID-19 vaccine?

Yes. DAF Service members were given the option to separate or retire (if eligible) instead of taking the COVID-19 vaccine prior to the established vaccination deadlines in 2021. In the future, DAF Service members who receive a denial of their medical, religious, or administrative exemption request (or appeal) will be given the option to separate or retire (if eligible) instead of taking the COVID-19 vaccine. Specific timelines and requirements are described in Secretary of the Air Force Memorandum, *Supplemental Coronavirus Disease 2019 Vaccination Policy* (December 7, 2021).

- 59) If I refuse the vaccine on a UTA or in other inactive duty status, can I be ordered to Annual Tour or other active duty and compelled to be vaccinated?

Yes, you may be ordered to Annual Tour with the appropriate notice. You will be expected to comply with the requirement to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. You may also do so at a civilian provider of your choice. If you elect to receive the vaccine at a civilian provider, an FDA approved or authorized (EUA) vaccine will satisfy the mandate. You will need to provide appropriate paperwork to your Unit Health Monitor to be entered in AHLTA and ASIMS for tracking purposes.

- 60) Is there a difference if I refuse the vaccine on inactive duty or active duty or Full-time National Guard Duty (FTNGD) status?

No. Members of the reserve components, in inactive duty, active duty, or FTNGD status, are required to comply with the COVID-19 vaccination mandate.

- 61) If I refuse the vaccine, will I be paid? Can I be “red-lined” and given an unexcused drill period? Will I be put in “no pay, no points” status?

AFR Traditional Reserve (TR) and Individual Mobilization Augmentee (IMA) members who fail to be vaccinated and have not submitted an exemption or accommodation will be placed in a no pay/no points status and involuntarily reassigned to the Individual Ready Reserve (IRR). Active Guard and Reserve (AGR) members who fail to be vaccinated and have not submitted an exemption or accommodation will have their AGR tour curtailed and involuntarily reassigned to the IRR.

ANG members that have not initiated a vaccination regimen by 31 December 2021 may not participate in drills, training, or other duty conducted under Title 10 or Title 32 U.S.C., and those with a remaining Military Service Obligation will be involuntarily assigned to the Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) in accordance with 10 U.S.C. § 651 and DoDI 1235.13, *Administration and Management of the Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) and the Inactive National Guard (ING)*.

- 62) What happens if I stop attending drill because I do not want to be vaccinated?

Drill periods missed without prior approval of the commander will be marked unexcused. Refusing to be vaccinated is not an acceptable excuse for not attending drill.

- 63) Do I have to fill out a form declining the vaccine? If so, will that also be in my VA health records?

Yes. Completing DHA Form 207 is required for all Service members, even those who decline the vaccination. The form will be retained in your permanent health records.

- 64) I’m an IMA. Can my active component unit stop my participation if I refuse the vaccine?

Yes. IMA members who fail to be vaccinated and have not submitted an exemption or accommodation will be placed in a no pay/no points status and involuntarily reassigned to the Individual Ready Reserve (IRR).

- 65) If I refuse the vaccine, will I be allowed to participate in order to get a ‘good year’ for retirement?

No. Members who fail to be vaccinated and have not submitted an exemption or accommodation will be placed in a no pay/no points status and involuntarily reassigned to the IRR. AGR members who fail to be vaccinated and have not submitted an exemption or accommodation will have their AGR tour curtailed and will be involuntarily reassigned to the IRR.

- 66) I’m an Air Reserve Technician (ART) and I have questions regarding which rules and processes I follow; the ones for military members or the ones for DAF civilian employees. Where do I go for answers?

Air Force Reserve personnel should contact AFRC/A1CE at afrc.dpce@us.af.mil

- 67) Can a member of the reserve component use an active component MTF to receive the COVID-19 vaccination while not in a paid duty status?

Yes.

- 68) I'm at a unit that only has FDA authorized (EUA) vaccines. If the active component Military Treatment Facility (MTF) gets an FDA licensed vaccine will reserve component members have to take it as well?

Yes. On an installation, the active component MTF and reserve Medical Unit will coordinate to ensure that there is enough FDA-approved Comirnaty (Pfizer) or Spikevax (Moderna) COVID-19 vaccine on hand for all unvaccinated Service members. However, members can always choose to get vaccinated on their own or wait for adequate supply at a DoD facility.

- 69) If a member of the reserve component receives a COVID-19 vaccination off-base while not in paid duty status, are they responsible for the cost? Can they seek treatment through TRICARE or the military medical system if they suffer complications? What about through the Veterans Health Administration (VHA)?

Service members, regardless of status, who require medical attention as a result of COVID-19 vaccination may utilize the military medical system. Determinations on benefits from the VHA or TRICARE will be made by each respectively. Most civilian vaccination programs are offering the COVID-19 vaccination free of charge. Members of the SELRES may utilize vaccination programs outside of MTFs and DoD vaccination sites, such as county and state programs.

- 70) Do ANG members need to comply with the SecAF vaccine mandate if the Governor of their State has issued a prohibition on vaccine mandates? Alternate question: Do ANG members need to comply with the SecAF vaccine mandate when in Title 32 status?

Yes. It is the Secretary of the Air Force's responsibility to promote the health, safety and military readiness of all Air Force and Space Force personnel, regardless of duty status, to include Air National Guard performing any duty or training under both Title 10 and Title 32 of the United States Code. COVID-19 poses a direct risk to the health, safety, and readiness of the force. Vaccination against COVID-19 is an essential military readiness requirement for all components of the Air Force and Space Force to ensure we maintain a healthy force that is mission ready.

In accordance with the 30 Nov 21 SecDef memorandum and the 7 Dec 21 SecAF memorandum, vaccination is essential to the health and readiness of the Force. Absent a pending or approved exemption, ANG members who are not fully vaccinated may not participate in drills, training, or other duty conducted under Title 10 and Title 32, U.S. Code. Those with a remaining MSO will be involuntarily assigned to the IRR in accordance with 10 U.S.C. § 651 and DoDI 1235.13. No credit or excused absence will be afforded for a member who did not participate in drills, training, or other duty due to failure to be fully vaccinated.