

Health

COVID Boosters Not Required for Some Chicago Hospital Staff

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Jan. 20 during the omicron surge. "Everyone is understaffed. Our regular, day-to-day workers are getting COVID at an alarming rate."

Hospitals across the country and in Illinois have lost workers since the start of the pandemic, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. The number of hospital employees in the US decreased by 2% from 5.24 million in March 2020 to 5.13 million in December 2021. In Illinois, the number of hospital employees decreased by about 4% from about 241,500 in March 2020 to 232,700 in December 2021.

More evidence of labor problems has emerged in a recent study. [survey](#) from the American College of Health Executives in Chicago, who surveyed 310 executives and found that understaffing was the top concern for hospital managers.

"Hospital systems, like other employers, are following CDC guidelines due to workforce shortages," says Margot Wolf O'Donnell, an employment lawyer at Benesch Friedlander Coplan & Aronoff. "In some cases, they don't want to exceed what is required to ensure there are enough staff to meet the needs of patients right now."

In accordance with state and federal requirements, Sinai Chicago, Chicago's largest social care hospital, requires employees to receive two doses of COVID-19 by December 31st. About 99% of the 3,200 healthcare workers complied, with few delays and just 14 layoffs. says spokesman Dan Regan.

While Sinai says it strongly encourages caregivers to get promoted, this is not yet a requirement. But more than 40% of the staff received a promotion.

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"Given this response and the fact that there are no state or federal requirements for boosters yet, we have not yet decided to make boosters mandatory," says Reagan.

Unlike some other states, including New Jersey, New York, California, and New Mexico, Illinois does not yet require all healthcare workers to be boosted, although it does require the first two doses. Gov. JB Pritzker's office did not respond to questions about boosters for healthcare workers. But now that COVID restrictions are set on [ease in Illinois](#) and across the country, the government may never introduce forced boosters, says Amanda Sonneborn, a Chicago lawyer with King & Spalding law firm in Atlanta.

"I doubt you will see (new mandates) given the fact that most of the government is dropping requirements rather than adding new requirements," says Sonneborn.

Whether or not boosters are ever needed for Illinois healthcare workers, some of them still prefer it. James Kerridge, an assistant chief nurse at Sinai Hospital in Chicago, received a booster shot in November. He has since encouraged colleagues to get a third dose.

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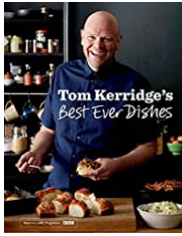
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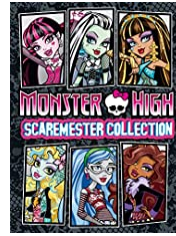
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