



NEWS from the Shelby County Mayor's Office

Lee Harris, Mayor

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 11, 2021

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**SHELBY COUNTY GOVERNMENT TO REQUIRE COVID TEST FOR
UNVACCINATED EMPLOYEES**

*New testing policy seeks to increase vaccinations in Shelby County Government, beginning with the
Shelby County Health Department*

Shelby County, TN – In alignment with federal partners, Shelby County Government will begin requiring regular asymptomatic testing for unvaccinated Shelby County employees whose occupations place them at a higher risk of transmitting COVID-19, beginning with employees of the Shelby County Health Department. The regular testing program will expand to other county employees in the coming weeks.

The new testing program will begin on Sept. 6, allowing unvaccinated workers over three weeks to initiate vaccination and avoid the testing requirement. Beginning the week of Sept. 6, unvaccinated employees will need to show proof of a negative COVID-19 test at least once every seven (7) days in order to identify asymptomatic COVID-19 infections and protect others from the contagious disease. The Shelby County Health Department will offer free regular testing for any Shelby County Government employee who requires or desires a test.

For months, Shelby County Government has led an internal campaign to provide information about the vaccine and encourage vaccinations among employees, including required trainings about the vaccine and common myths associated with it. When Shelby County Government surveyed Health Department employees regarding the federal model approach, 82% said they support mandatory testing of unvaccinated employees. Around 80% reported that they had



already begun the vaccination process, and more than 70% of Health Department employees have received two vaccines. Survey results found that nearly 77% support the testing of all county employees who have not been vaccinated and that 77% also said there should be no exemptions given for regular COVID testing.

Additionally, Shelby County Government has offered on-site vaccinations for employees, cash incentives, and paid time off for employees to get the vaccine. Shelby County employees currently have the opportunity to take up to four hours off with pay for each dose of the coronavirus vaccine.

Mayor Lee Harris: “Since the arrival of the vaccine, we have done what we can to educate employees, incentivize vaccination, and even provide paid time off to go get the shot. This latest program will give employees a choice to either submit to weekly testing or to roll up their sleeve and receive the vaccine. Vaccination is key to lowering transmission levels, reducing hospitalizations, and getting our community out of this pandemic.”

Dr. Michelle Taylor, Health Department Director: “We strongly encourage other employers, large and small, to require COVID-19 vaccinations or to adopt the approach of testing all unvaccinated employees. Regular asymptomatic testing will also allow us to better surveil spread among unvaccinated employees and reduce potential outbreaks. We have followed our federal partners’ lead and hope to see other employers of all sizes do the same.”

(End of Release)