



## **MNA Position Statement Regarding Vaccinations May 18, 2021**

### **Purpose**

Historically, the Montana Nurses Association (MNA) has strongly supported immunizations to protect the public from highly communicable and deadly diseases such as measles, mumps, diphtheria, pertussis, and influenza, moreover, has supported appropriate evidence based vaccination policies for registered nurses and health care workers. Under certain circumstances, MNA understands the need for mandatory vaccines (exemptions noted below), especially due to the several recent and significant measles outbreaks in the United States, as well as the global pandemic of COVID-19.

### **Statement of MNA Position**

Effective protection of the public health necessitates that all individuals who are able to do so receive immunizations against vaccine-preventable diseases according to the best and most current evidence outlined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP). Accordingly, all health care personnel (HCP), including registered nurses (RNs) and advance practice registered nurses (APRNs), should be vaccinated according to current recommendations for immunization of HCP by the CDC and Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology (APIC).

Consistent with state and federal law, MNA strongly supports exemptions from immunization for medical contraindications or sincerely held religious beliefs. For example, the United States Equal Opportunity Employment Commission (EEOC) has issued guidance that “once an employer is on notice that an employee’s sincerely held religious belief, practice, or observance prevents the employee from receiving the vaccination, the employer must provide a reasonable accommodation for the religious belief, practice, or observance unless it would pose an undue hardship under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act.” For additional guidance from the EEOC, including on the relationship between federal disability protections and vaccine requirements in the workplace, visit <https://www.eeoc.gov/wysk/what-you-should-know-about-covid-19-and-ada-rehabilitation-act-and-other-eeo-laws>.

MNA understands that some RNs and APRNs may not be able to obtain vaccinations as a result of the above noted contraindications and the MNA supports employers making accommodations in these circumstances. Under the recently enacted Montana House Bill 702, individuals exempted from vaccination may be required to adopt measures or practices in the workplace to reduce the chance of disease transmission and expect employers to offer reasonable accommodations in such circumstances. The MNA encourages RNs and APRNs to work together with their employers to ensure that such accommodations are tailored to reduce disease transmission and encourages all nurses and HCP to stay up to date on and follow policies guided by current, evidence-based CDC and ACIP recommendations.

**Approved by MNA Board of Directors May 18, 2021**



Appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE), along with evidence-based policies and practices, should be made available for all health care workers, whether they choose to vaccinate or not.

MNA strongly recommends that registered nurses be vaccinated against COVID-19. However, as the Covid-19 vaccine is currently under EUA (emergency use authorization) we recognize that without a well-established safety profile, the risk benefit analysis could be such that nurses choose not to be vaccinated. MNA recognizes and supports those nurses choosing to wait to be vaccinated until final FDA approval or more evidence based safety data about the Covid-19 vaccine effectiveness and/or medical contraindications is developed.

**MNA does not believe** nurses should be retaliated against by employers if they choose **NOT** to be vaccinated and supports employers accommodating all nurses and HCP who choose against vaccination at this time.

Still, the MNA recognizes that nurses have a professional responsibility and an ethical duty to protect patients at all levels—as individuals, families, groups, communities, and populations. We recognize the immense power of vaccines in the history and protection of public health, and encourage all nurses, HCPs, and community members to consider vaccination as an important step each one of us can take to protect ourselves, each other, and the patients we work so hard to care for. If any individual has concerns regarding getting vaccinated, please reach out to your local public health department and discuss your particular decision with your health care provider.

As novel diseases emerge, such as COVID-19, MNA supports ongoing scientific research and development of safe, easily accessible, and affordable vaccinations for these public health threats.

**Vaccinations must be available to everyone!**

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