

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
MIDDLE DISTRICT OF LOUISIANA

IN RE: ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER  
EMPLOYEE No. 2021 - 7  
COVID-19 VACCINATION  
MANDATE

**ORDER**

The United States District Court for the Middle District of Louisiana continues to closely monitor the public health emergency created by the COVID-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 “Delta Variant” has recently caused a spike in virus cases in this District, increasing both hospitalizations and deaths. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention note that for every parish in this District the risk of community spread of the COVID-19 virus is rated as “highest.”

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, this Court has had to curtail operations, resulting in a reduction of trial activity and in-person hearings by more than 75% since the beginning of the pandemic. Relatedly, the resources required to support trials and in-person hearings have increased more than three-fold to accommodate additional measures necessary to ensure, to the greatest extent possible, the health and safety of all individuals in the courthouse.

Unlike in the earlier stages of this pandemic, safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines are now widely available in the United States. At least one vaccine, Pfizer-BioNTech, has now received full approval from the United States Food and Drug Administration.

Accordingly, in the dual interests of protecting the health and safety of the Middle District of Louisiana's employees, contractors, and the public we serve and fulfilling this Court's constitutional obligations, effective October 29, 2021,

**IT IS ORDERED** that all employees seeking to enter the Russell B. Long Federal Building and United States Courthouse and the United States Bankruptcy Court ("courthouses") must be fully vaccinated<sup>1</sup> against the COVID-19 virus (unless the Court has granted an exemption from this vaccination mandate on medical or religious grounds). For purposes of this Order, "employees" shall be defined as all employees, contractors and interns of the District Court (chambers and Clerk's Office), Bankruptcy Court (chambers and Clerk's Office), the Probation and Pretrial Services Offices, and Defender Services having duty stations (temporary or permanent) within the Russell B. Long Federal Building and United States Courthouse and the United States Bankruptcy Court.

**IT IS FURTHER ORDERED** that all other tenants of the courthouses, including employees of the U.S. Marshals Service, the United States Attorney's Office, and the United States General Services Administration, and any contractors or agents thereof ("courthouse tenants"), will be required to be fully vaccinated before entering any and all courtrooms or judicial chambers (unless the Court has granted an exemption from this vaccination mandate on medical or religious grounds).

Exemptions to the vaccination requirement will only be considered for individuals with medical conditions that prevent them from being vaccinated or for individuals with sincerely held religious beliefs that prohibit them from being vaccinated. The Chief Judge

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<sup>1</sup> "Fully vaccinated" is defined as two weeks after receiving the second dose of a two-dose vaccine (Pfizer or Moderna) or the single-dose vaccine (Johnson & Johnson).

will consider all exemption requests. Exemption requests will remain completely confidential.

The COVID-19 Vaccination Protocol for Employees dated September 17, 2021, disseminated contemporaneously with this Order (the “COVID-19 Vaccination Protocol for Employees,” which may be revised or amended at the Court’s discretion), sets forth the vaccination reporting and exemption requirements for employees and is incorporated herein as part of this Order.

Courthouse tenants must submit exemption requests by October 15, 2021. Courthouse tenant exemption requests must be submitted in writing via electronic mail (email) or U.S. Mail. Email requests may be sent to [vaxexemption@lamd.uscourts.gov](mailto:vaxexemption@lamd.uscourts.gov) (District Court) or [vaxexemption@lamb.uscourts.gov](mailto:vaxexemption@lamb.uscourts.gov) (Bankruptcy Court). U.S. mail should be sent to the relevant administrative office of the Court Unit (e.g., District Clerk’s Office or Bankruptcy Clerk’s Office) to the attention of **Vaccine Exemption**. To request an exemption, courthouse tenants must submit a signed letter providing sufficient details to permit full consideration of the request. Additionally, all exemption requests must include the following attestation statement:

*I understand that I am required to provide accurate information and that false statements could subject me to legal consequences, including fines and/or imprisonment. By signing this exemption request letter, I hereby declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing statements are true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.*

For medical exemption requests, a fully executed Physician Attestation Form, which is available on the Court’s public-facing website, must accompany the written request to be

considered. Courthouse tenants granted an exemption must possess a fully executed Judicial Chambers/Courtroom Entry Certification to enter judicial chambers or courtrooms. Courthouse tenants granted an exemption will also be required to possess proof of COVID-19 testing having a negative test result<sup>2</sup> administered no more than 24 hours prior before entering any judicial chambers or courtroom. Judicial officers may require proof of vaccination or testing results as may be deemed appropriate to protect the health and safety of employees and the public we serve.

The Court Unit Executive (CUE) or highest ranking official of each respective courthouse tenant is responsible for ensuring compliance with this Order by its employees and contractors.

The pandemic may demand extension of this Order to admitted members of the bar (and their litigation support staff) and other public entrants in the future. Accordingly, members of the bar (and their litigation support staff) with active cases in this Court are encouraged to submit proof of vaccination via email or U.S. Mail by completing the Middle District of Louisiana COVID-19 Vaccination Status Attestation Form, which is available on the Court's public-facing website, via email to the aforementioned email addresses. U.S. mail should be sent to the relevant administrative office of the Court Unit (e.g., District Clerk's Office, Probation/Pre-Trial Services Office, Bankruptcy Clerk's Office) to the attention of **Vaccine Attestation**. For members of the bar who have active cases in both District Court and Bankruptcy Court, a separate attestation should be sent to each court. Members of the bar (and their litigation support staff) only need to complete the vaccination attestation process once.

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<sup>2</sup> "At-home" COVID-19 test results will not be accepted by the Court. Only tests results obtained through a pharmacy, health department, doctor's office or other healthcare provider will be accepted.

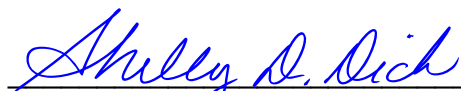
Unvaccinated employees will be denied admission to the courthouses unless they are in possession of an approved exemption certificate signed by the Chief Judge. Unvaccinated courthouse tenants will be denied access to judicial chambers and courtrooms unless they are in possession of an approved exemption certificate signed by the Chief Judge.

While inside the courthouses, all individuals must comply with applicable Administrative Orders (including requirements to wear masks and observe social distancing), and court security officer instructions and shall observe all posted signs and placards. The mask mandate and social distancing protocols remain in full force and effect. Anyone who fails or refuses to comply will be required to leave the judicial chambers, courtroom, and/or courthouses immediately.

This Order rescinds and supersedes internal Administrative Order 2021-6 and shall remain in effect until further Order of this Court or until rescinded.

**SO ORDERED** on September 17, 2021

**FOR THE COURT:**



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SHELLY D. DICK, CHIEF UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE  
MIDDLE DISTRICT OF LOUISIANA