

## **COVID-19 Alert: Workplace COVID-19 Guidelines Remain Mostly Unchanged**

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As vaccinations become more available in the state, IRMA members have likely experienced a higher vaccination rate amongst their employees compared to the general public. At the time of this publication, approximately 50% of adults in Illinois and 30% of all Illinois residents (including minors) have been vaccinated. In other words, 70% of all Illinois residents have not yet been fully vaccinated. With the increased availability of vaccines, the CDC and IDPH have issued new guidelines that lift some COVID-19 safety protocols during personal and social activities for those who have been vaccinated. These more relaxed guidelines currently apply to private gatherings such as visiting with family members or attending small public events. However, it is significant to note that none of the pre-existing protocols for COVID-19 protection in the workplace have been lifted or modified, with one exception: vaccinated employees who have been exposed but do not have symptoms do not need to quarantine (See [IRMA Article](#) on changes to quarantine length). This has caused some confusion as vaccinated employees are seeking more relaxed measures in masking, social distancing, and disinfecting from their employers.

We know that vaccines are effective in reducing the severity of infection, however, the question of how well vaccines prevent vaccinated persons from carrying or spreading the virus and how effective they are against new variants is still under review (See [CDC](#) and [IDPH](#) notices). As the CDC has stated, “In indoor public spaces, the vaccination status of other people or whether they are at increased risk for severe COVID-19 is likely unknown. Therefore, fully vaccinated people should continue to wear a mask that fits snugly against the sides of your face and doesn’t have gaps, cover coughs and sneezes, wash hands often, and follow any applicable workplace or school guidance.” (See [CDC Guidance for Fully Vaccinated Persons](#)). For these reasons, IRMA continues to recommend that all IRMA members maintain strict enforcement of masking, social distancing, and disinfecting in the workplace. Employers have a duty to maintain a safe and healthy work environment and IRMA member employees interact with the less-vaccinated public on a routine basis. IRMA will continue to monitor and relay to the membership updates from CDC and IDPH regarding changes in workplace COVID-19 protocols.

It should be emphasized that the rebuttable presumption law requires an employer to enforce applicable guidelines in order to rebut the presumption. The existing applicable guidelines still require masking, social distancing, and disinfecting (See [DCEO Phase 4 Guidance](#)). To avoid the risk of work-related cases and outbreaks, IRMA recommends that members continue to apply their workplace COVID-19 protocols whether employees are working indoors, outdoors, or participating in training activities.

### **Additional Resources:**

- [FAQs about COVID-19 Vaccination in the Workplace: For Employers](#)
- [Workplace Vaccination Program: Reopening Your Workplace](#)
- [Guidance for Businesses and Employers Responding to Coronavirus Disease 2019](#)
- [Guidance For Employers and Employees on Workers' Rights and Safety | IDPH \(illinois.gov\)](#)