
Sponsor: Human Resources

Meeting Date: 8/17/2021

Title: Vaccine and Testing Protocols and Incentives

File Number: 2021-450

Background and Rationale:

On March 6, 2020, Minnesota reported its first case of COVID-19. As of August 11, 2021, the state of Minnesota has recorded more than 622,000 cases of COVID-19 and more than 7700 deaths. In recent weeks, the COVID-19 Delta variant, a highly contagious SARS-CoV-2 virus strain, was identified as accounting for more than 90% of all COVID-19 infections in Minnesota. Ramsey County is currently identified as an area of “substantial transmission” related to rates of infection while neighboring counties are beginning to move into more critical rates classified as “high transmission.”

Vaccinations began in December of 2020 under an Emergency Use Authorization and were rolled out first to those in long term care facilities, first responders and populations over the age of 65. As of April 2021, all adults and most recently, children over the age of 12 are eligible to get vaccinated. Close to 70% of Minnesota’s population has received at least one shot of vaccine. COVID-19 vaccines have been proven to be safe and effective, and remain the best method of preventing transmission of COVID-19 and preventing serious illness, hospitalization or death.

In recent weeks, the federal government and the state of Minnesota enacted a requirement that all workers and contractors will attest to their vaccination status or be subject to COVID-19 testing requirements. Many private employers have enacted vaccine mandates.

In the coming weeks, Ramsey County will implement policy and process requiring all employees to provide proof of vaccination or be subject to regular testing, as well as an infrastructure to administer this process. Ramsey County must do its part and act to prevent the spread and further mutation of the COVID-19 virus. Ramsey County has a duty to protect its workforce and to continue to protect and care for our residents.

Recommendation:

The Ramsey County Board of Commissioners resolved to:

1. Authorize the County Manager to expend up to \$1 million from federal Coronavirus response funds:
 - a. To implement an employee incentive program for all employees who provide information regarding receiving a COVID-19 vaccine or vaccine series.
 - b. To support any testing or auditing infrastructure that is required to effectively administer a program in which all Ramsey County employees are required to be vaccinated against or regularly tested for COVID-19.
 - c. Authorized expenditures can be made across multiple years consistent with the availability of each funding source used.
2. Direct the County Manager to implement a requirement that all Ramsey County employees are required to be vaccinated against or in absence of vaccination be regularly tested for COVID-19.
3. Require the County Manager to provide at least a thirty (30) day notice to all employees and the County Board prior to implementation of the vaccine or testing requirement.

A motion to approve was made by Commissioner McDonough, seconded by Commissioner McGuire. Motion passed.

Aye: - 7: Carter, Frethem, MatasCastillo, McDonough, McGuire, Ortega, and Reinhardt

By: 

Mee Cheng, Chief Clerk - County Board