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Weekly Newsletter

NEWS & EVENTS | September 1, 2021



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We know that many of you have questions about U of T's vaccine policy and what it means for you. It has been stressful and confusing for all to have the policy come out gradually in stages and brief updates. We know that you have questions regarding timing, process, accommodations, testing, etc. **At this point, the most up-to-date information is on the University's FAQ website. <https://www.utoronto.ca/utogether/faqs> It notes at the top which questions have been updated and the date.** We are working on an updated FAQ for our members as well.

The Local's Executive has had two special meetings to discuss and adopt a position on the mandatory vaccine policies at our employers (U of T, Vic, SMC, UTS). The following statement was adopted on August 30th and will inform how we respond to the policy and to individual members needing assistance.

Sincerely,

USW Local 1998 Executive

USW Local 1998 Statement on Employer Vaccine Policies

August 30, 2021

As of August 27 2021, all employers with USW Local 1998 members (University of Toronto, Victoria, St. Mike's and U of T Schools) have implemented vaccine policies for their staff and students.

The following is the Local 1998 Executive's general position on vaccination policies.

We recognize that we are living in an unprecedented global pandemic which has had a tremendous impact on every aspect of our lives: our physical and health, our work, our families, and the overall economy.

Scientific evidence indicates that vaccines are effective at preventing serious outcomes due to COVID-19, such as severe illness, hospitalization and death.

Throughout the pandemic, the Local has been advocating for the health and safety of our members and we consider vaccination to be one important health and safety measure for people working on campus. The USW at all levels is urging our members to get vaccinated both for their own well-being as well as those of their families, co-workers, members of the University community and the public.

Employers have a legal obligation to ensure a safe workplace and to follow Public Health and provincial guidelines on COVID. We recognize that, in these circumstances, employers have a right to implement a vaccine policy.

The Executive's position is that any vaccine policy must:

- **have stringent privacy protections for the handling of personal information**
- **provide reasonable accommodations that respect the overall health and safety of the workplace**
- **does not lead to discipline or termination of our members**

The Local will:

- **continue to advocate for a strong health and safety response to COVID and fair and consistent implementation of any vaccine policies at all of our employers University of Toronto, Victoria, St. Mike's and UTS.**
- **ensure members have current information on the employers' policies as they are updated**
- **ensure members have access to accurate information on vaccines**
- **assist members in accessing vaccine appointments**
- **help members with requests for accommodation and help them overcome obstacles to complying with the policy**

Vaccination alone is not enough. The Local will continue to pressure our employers to implement a robust health and safety plan which includes all of the recommendations on the Health and Safety Checklist for University Re-opening being promoted by UTFA, CUPE and USW. These include the use of masks, distancing, ventilation, disinfection, sewage and wastewater testing.

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health and safety measure the University can implement is a slow and measured return to on-campus work. Those who do not work with students should continue working from home 100% for the time being.



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