PRESS RELEASE

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LeadingAge Virginia Supports COVID-19 Vaccine Mandate for All Long-term Care Staff

GLEN ALLEN, VA – LeadingAge Virginia – an association representing not-for-profit aging services organizations throughout Virginia – announced today that it is joining the call for a COVID-19 vaccine mandate for all current and new staff working in the long-term care field.

The organization’s decision is informed by action taken by the LeadingAge national board of directors on Monday, and by the LeadingAge Virginia Board’s support of this action, which has signed on to a joint statement with more than a dozen other national related organizations requiring vaccines for all staff in long-term care and other healthcare settings.

“Our position reflects the ethical obligation of providers to deliver safe, quality care to older adults and others they serve,” said Melissa Andrews, President & CEO of LeadingAge Virginia. “The COVID-19 vaccine is the most effective tool to protect individuals from the virus, and it must be a condition of employment for all healthcare workers, including employees, contract staff, and others.”

Aging services and associated healthcare centers have been working diligently to increase vaccination rates. Current statistics show that more than 81% of nursing home residents are fully vaccinated. However, as new COVID-19 variants emerge and proliferate, even fully vaccinated older adults in long-term care can be at risk, including from the unvaccinated staff who care for them. While nursing home staff vaccination rates vary widely across the country, with a national rate of just over 58%, recent data shows only 69% of Virginia’s nursing home staff are currently vaccinated.

The most recent scientific evidence available shows that:

- COVID-19 vaccines are safe.
- COVID-19 vaccines are effective for preventing infection and especially severe illness and death.
- COVID-19 vaccines reduce the risk of spreading the virus.
- COVID-19 vaccines, like all vaccines, are not 100% effective, so breakthrough infections can happen.
- Older adults and those with additional medical conditions are at greater risk of severe illness or death from a COVID-19 infection.

“Care professionals are the heart of aging services, and throughout the pandemic, they have demonstrated their dedication, commitment, and bravery in the face of unprecedented, challenging circumstances,” Andrews added.

LeadingAge Virginia recommends that appropriate exemptions be made for those with medical, religious reasons, or as specified by federal or state law.

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About LeadingAge Virginia
LeadingAge Virginia is an association of not-for-profit aging services organizations serving residents and clients across the senior care continuum including life plan/continuing care communities, senior housing, assisted living, nursing homes, adult day centers, and home and community-based services. For more information, please visit https://leadingagevirginia.org/.