



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NAHCA Issues Statement on COVID-19 Vaccinations for Certified Nursing Assistants

CARL JUNCTION, MO. (Aug. 12, 2021): Following much deliberation and consideration about COVID-19 and the rise of its variants, the National Association of Health Care Assistants (NAHCA) remains divided on the issue of supporting across-the-board vaccine mandates for all aging services employees. While NAHCA urges all frontline staff caring for elders to get vaccinated, the organization also recognizes the significant division on the question of vaccinations among its membership.

As the only national organization that represents Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs), NAHCA and its Board of Directors acknowledges that there is solid evidence to support the safety and efficacy of the vaccinations. However, among NAHCA's membership of more than 26,000 CNAs, a significant number remain hesitant to get vaccinated. Following are the underlying reasons for this hesitancy:

- Insufficient efforts to educate and build confidence in the vaccine among the public, as well as among frontline staff;
- Confusing and mixed messages from leadership at federal, state, and local government entities;
- Widespread lack of support throughout the pandemic in the form of PPE and other measures that could have better protected CNAs and the elders they care for;
- Chronic underfunding and understaffing in nursing homes that sometimes leads to substandard care and difficult and dangerous working conditions; and
- A long history of poor benefits and pay that in many cases do not amount to a living wage.

“We recognize and respect employers’ rights to require COVID-19 vaccines for its employees, as long as they are implemented in accordance with federal and state laws and adhere to appropriate exemptions for those with medical conditions or religious objections,” says Sherry Perry, chair of the NAHCA Board of Directors. “However, it is our position that more must be done not only to address CNAs’ concerns about the vaccine, but also to improve the underlying issues that these dedicated frontline care staff have faced for the entirety of their careers.”

NAHCA believes that by addressing these issues through credible education and open dialogue with trusted individuals and entities, more CNAs will be inclined to be inoculated. The organization is committed to building confidence in the vaccines among CNAs through the following efforts:

1. The creation of educational resources in consultation with thought leaders in the field who are committed to sincere and substantive dialogue with CNAs;
2. Strategic communication tools, such as videos and testimonials that tell the stories of CNAs' journeys from hesitancy to vaccination;
3. Research aimed at building vaccine confidence and raising immunization rates among frontline health care staff.

"It's about time for employers, payers, and policy makers to recognize that marginalizing CNAs for so long has its consequences," adds Lori Porter, NAHCA founder and CEO. "In this case, those consequences have led to mistrust of those in authority and confusion around what is best for CNAs and for the elders they serve. Is it any wonder that so many are hesitant about getting vaccinated?"

About the National Association of Health Care Assistants (NAHCA)

NAHCA is a professional association of and for Certified Nursing Assistants and represents more than 26,000 CNA members across the country. NAHCA elevates the professional standing and performance of caregivers through recognition, advocacy, education, and empowerment to maximize success and quality care.

Media Contact:

Dane Henning

Director of Public Affairs

dhenning@nahcacna.org

(417) 291-1502

