

## **Largest operator of nursing homes in U.S. issues vaccine mandate for all workers**

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(HealthDay)—The United States' largest operator of nursing homes said

Wednesday that its workers must get vaccinated against COVID-19 if they want to keep their jobs.

The announcement from Pennsylvania-based Genesis Healthcare—which has 70,000 employees at nearly 400 nursing homes and senior communities—suggests the nursing [home](#) industry's reluctance to force employees to get vaccinated due to fears about losing too many workers may be shifting, the *Associated Press* reported.

Understaffing is a major problem in the sector, but concerns about the surging Delta variant may convince nursing home owners they need to take action to quickly vaccinate the 40% of employees who still haven't received shots.

Voluntary vaccination was appropriate earlier in the pandemic, but only 65% of Genesis staff have received shots, according to the company. Employees have until Aug. 23 to get their first shot.

"To succeed against the Delta variant is going to require much higher vaccination rates," Genesis Chief Medical Officer Richard Feifer told the *AP*. "Our tactics in the fight have to change."

Unvaccinated staff members endanger residents, warn experts who are calling for mandatory vaccinations at nursing homes. Some workers have avoided the vaccine because they think it was rushed into development and is unsafe, or they feel protected because they already had a bout of COVID-19, the *AP* reported.

About 80% of nursing home residents have been vaccinated, but even vaccinated residents are at risk because many are frail and have weak immune systems, the *AP* reported.

More than 130,000 U.S. nursing home residents have died from

COVID-19, according to the *AP*.

Jennifer Moore, of Hollywood, Fla., has a husband living at a nursing home where only 35% of the staff is vaccinated.

"Whenever I see a story about somebody being [anti-vax](#), I just want to scream," said Moore, whose husband, Thomas, has Parkinson's disease. "I understand people have concerns about the vaccine, but these people are working with the most vulnerable population. They have a duty to their patients."

**More information:** Visit the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for more on [COVID vaccines](#).

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