

On Thursday, May 13th, the Centers for Disease Control released [new guidance](#) on recommended wearing of masks for those fully vaccinated for the COVID-19 virus. The CDC recommends that fully vaccinated people can resume activities without wearing a mask or physically distancing, except when required by federal, state, local, tribal or territorial rules or if experiencing symptoms of COVID-19.

Businesses seeking guidance on establishing mask rules for their employees and customers are still bound by regulations in their state and local jurisdictions. Remember, the CDC guidelines are just that – guidelines. Therefore, if you are required by state or local regulations to maintain a mask mandate, for the time being, those requirements remain. Mask wearing by vaccinated people is still required in some settings such as health care facilities, while flying or taking public transit.

Those unvaccinated are still encouraged, and in many jurisdictions required, to continue wearing masks and socially distance.

What This Means for Our Clients

It is anticipated that state and local jurisdictions will loosen mask mandates for vaccinated individuals in the near future and private businesses will continue to have leeway in maintaining mask requirements in their establishments.

This change of guidance creates a number of unresolved questions for employers. How to know if someone is truly vaccinated? What proof is required of employees, customers, vendors? Essentially, each establishment must plan their own response accordingly.

At Affinity HR Group, our advice is to alleviate the mask mandate for those fully vaccinated and to ask for documentation for verification. Just ask to see it (don't keep a copy) and explain you only want the information about the vaccine - nothing else. Then, you can record who can be maskless and who should continue to wear a mask. To maintain a safe workplace, we encourage employers to continue to require those non-vaccinated individuals to wear masks and socially distance to protect vulnerable employees and customers until the CDC institutes further guidance.

This also creates an opportunity for businesses challenged by vaccine hesitancy among their workforce. In addition to providing guidance, reassurance and support for employees reluctant to get vaccinated, allowing employees who are fully vaccinated to resume business as usual without the restrictions of mask wearing or socially distancing may create the incentive necessary for them to consider vaccination.

Regardless of any pushback you get from employees, business owners can set the policies you think are necessary to keep employees safe and healthy, even if they are more strict than the current requirements in your area.

For help in developing your workplace vaccine and mask policy connect with us at contact@AffinityHRGroup.com or 877-660-6400. [Our COVID-19 HR Support](#) is an affordable option for businesses who require extra help in navigating the ongoing workplace changes.