

## Many long-term care workers resist COVID vaccinations. Can they be mandated?

It's a question that many long-term care employers, from individual families to big national companies, are confronting as vaccines become more available, although not available enough: In a pandemic, can they require vaccination for those who care for very vulnerable older adults? Should they?

Some employers aren't waiting. Atria Senior Living, one of the nation's largest assisted living chains, has announced that by May 1 all staff members must be fully vaccinated.

Silverado, a small chain of dementia care homes, most on the West Coast, mandated vaccination by March 1. Juniper Communities, which operates 22 facilities in four states, has also adopted a mandate.

"We felt it was the best way to protect people, not just our residents but our team members and their families," said Lynne Katzmann, Juniper's chief executive. Of the company's nearly 1,300 employees, "about 30 individuals have self-terminated" because of the vaccination requirement, she reported.

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Juniper's experience supports what public health experts have said for years: Vaccine mandates, like those that many health care organizations have established for the flu vaccine, remain controversial — but they do increase vaccination rates. As of Feb. 25, 97.7 percent of Juniper residents had received two vaccine doses, and so had 96 percent of its staff members.

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