



Iowa Health Care Association
Iowa Center for Assisted Living
Iowa Center for Home Care

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Statement from IHCA President & CEO Brent Willett Regarding CMS Final Interim Rule on Long-Term Care Staff Vaccination

The top priority for Iowa's nearly 800 long-term care providers is the safety, health and well-being of their patients, residents and the staff who care for them. While the intent of the Biden Administration's CMS vaccination mandate and the interim final federal rule issued today is noble, the Iowa Health Care Association is extremely concerned about the devastating unintended consequences it could create. We oppose the rule in its current form but will work with our members to comply to the best of their ability while balancing the health and well-being of the vulnerable Iowans in their care. What we will not do is sacrifice the safety of Iowans being cared for in long-term care facilities in service to a federal regulation that runs counter to those purposes.

The rule provides neither the time nor the resources providers need to continue to grow overall staff vaccination rates, which have been growing at 6% per month in Iowa long-term care without a mandate, and now stand at more than 70%, to provide care in the face of a labor shortage that will be needlessly exacerbated by the rule. Instead, the new federal rule puts care providers in the precarious position of choosing to employ enough people to keep their doors open or to comply with an inoperative federal regulation.

The new rule leaves a lot to sort out in the next eight weeks before the January 4 full vaccination deadline for most American long-term care workers. We encourage our health care workers, who have gone extraordinary lengths throughout the pandemic to care for others, to remember the reason you joined the health care field to begin with, and to hang in there with us as we work through this new challenge.

We also encourage our elected officials and regulators to consider how to provide our health care workers with the resources and support they need to care for Iowans as the workforce crisis in health care deepens thanks to today's rule.

About the Iowa Health Care Association

The Iowa Health Care Association (IHCA) and its divisions, Iowa Center for Assisted Living (ICAL) and Iowa Center for Home Care (IHC) represent 790 Iowa organizations that provide long-term care to Iowans through nursing facilities, assisted living, residential care, senior living communities and home health agencies.

