

## **Continuation of Updated COVID-19 Statement**

Therefore, CAAHEP strongly recommends that all students and faculty and staff in all CAAHEP-accredited programs be vaccinated, especially when clinical facilities and Capstone Field Internship sites require it in order to participate in the patient care experience and progress in their programs. Students in health care professions programs come into close contact with the public, particularly in clinical and prehospital settings. Thus, the vaccine helps protect both health care students, staff, and their patients by reducing the spread of the disease and preventing deaths. In addition, people who are unvaccinated—including students, faculty, staff, and patients—remain the most vulnerable to COVID-19. Therefore, the CDC urges that in order to end this pandemic, all people should get vaccinated.

CAAHEP affirms that students, faculty, and staff, with appropriate exemptions required by federal and/or state law, may be exempted from receiving the COVID-19 vaccines. One category of appropriate exemptions is for students who have a qualifying disability under Titles II or III of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the attendant regulations of the United States Department of Justice, or under similar state statutes and regulations. Another category of appropriate exemptions is for students who have a sincerely held religious belief, practice, or observance under the First or Fourteenth Amendments of the United States Constitution, and under applicable federal statutes and regulations that protect students from unlawful discrimination on the basis of religion. Protection from religious discrimination is also provided by state laws, some of which offer protections that go beyond those of federal law.

CAAHEP also strongly recommends students and prospective students be notified in writing, with a signed statement by each student that she/he has read the notice and understands its consequences, to the effect that students who are not fully vaccinated against COVID-19—regardless of the reasons for their declination of being vaccinated, and even if such declination is predicated upon a legally-cognizable disability or a sincerely held religious belief—the student may not be able to: (1) participate in an externship/practicum/Capstone Field Internship experience; (2) complete the requirements and graduate from the program; (3) sit for any licensing or certification examinations in the profession; and (4) be employed in the profession.

In addition to receiving the COVID-19 vaccine, CAAHEP acknowledges adopting additional prevention practices continues to be the best defense for protection. According to the CDC, this includes:

- Wear a mask
- Stay 6 feet away from others
- Avoid crowds and poorly ventilated spaces
- Wash your hands often
- Cover coughs and sneezes
- Clean and disinfect surfaces
- Monitor your health daily