

**From:** Mark Beggs <[mbeggs@edenwald.org](mailto:mbeggs@edenwald.org)>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 9, 2021 3:59 PM  
**Subject:** Making the COVID Vaccination Mandatory  
**Importance:** High

Edenwald Team Members,

As I'm sure you all have come to realize, I feel passionately about our need to achieve a high-level of vaccination at Edenwald. As a result I am moving us in the direction of making the COVID-19 vaccination mandatory.

Let me first say that I do not want to lose a single staff person over this decision. We have been through, and accomplished, so much over the last year; we have managed to keep our residents both safe and happy, we have pulled together as a team and pivoted to make things happen in ways we would have never imagined, and we did it all because we had to. I do not make the decision to move towards mandatory vaccination lightly, any more than countless other decisions I have been forced to make over the last year. As I heard someone say recently, 'none of us wanted the pandemic, or what it did to our lives, all we can do now is make what we feel is the next best decision.'

I really feel deep in my heart that this is what we must do. What is driving me to make this decision now are several factors, many from a resident's perspective:

- Our elderly residents, due to their age, are living on borrowed time. They have lost one-full-year of their lives to this pandemic.
- They have been unable to see and have quality time with their family and loved ones.
- We have had over 50% of our healthcare residents pass in the last year, alone and away from their families (spouses and children), many so confused they didn't completely comprehend what was going on.
- Marriages that have endured 50+ years, end between plexi-glass or gowns/face shields and rubber gloves, unable to hold the love of their lives one last time.
- Funerals where family members can't gather to mourn their loss.
- Residents declining significantly, getting confused and depressed due to loneliness and lack of activity.

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We haven't done these things to our residents intentionally, but it is what they have endured and I feel very strongly that this is the decision we need to make now. We need to give them their lives back. We leave here every day to go home, see our family, move about the world freely (hopefully masked and socially distanced). Our residents don't have that luxury. They are the most likely to be affected and they do not have the ability to just move, they've tied their whole future to Edenwald and that is a heavy burden of responsibility, one that sits with me daily.

The residents have overwhelmingly demonstrated their acceptance of the vaccination. As a community, they have achieved a 99.71% vaccination level. They want their lives back and they have taken the necessary steps to keep themselves safe over the last year and to reclaim their life now. Yet despite their courage to take these steps, their lives will continue to be in limbo with only 65% of staff choosing to get vaccinated. At this point our community will remain closed, not to protect our residents, but to protect the staff who are choosing not to be vaccinated. Considering that this is the residents' home, it just doesn't seem right to me.

I know for those of you who have not made the choice to get vaccinated, you have done so for various reasons. There is uncertainty and fear. We have spent the last several months providing education and resources to help you educate yourself and to build confidence in the vaccine and what needs to occur to end this pandemic. At this time, I'm asking that you show the courage it takes to take the next step to protect yourself, your family, your coworkers and our residents. We must do this for them! They deserve our courage!

Going forward, agreeing too and receiving the vaccination will be a mandatory condition of employment at Edenwald. You may still be excused from receiving the vaccination if you have a genuine medical reason (documented by a physician) or a religious objection (that can be verified). We will allow a window of opportunity to comply with this new requirement. Our next clinic is on Wednesday, February 24<sup>th</sup>. That is currently the last scheduled opportunity to receive the vaccination here at Edenwald. We will work towards trying to arrange

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other clinics here and provide additional resources. Our goal is to have 100% compliance with everyone eligible to receive the vaccine by May 31<sup>st</sup>.

I will be scheduling small group meetings to discuss this in person. Though I have made this decision, these meetings are not to pressure anyone, they are for me to have an opportunity to express to you how important I feel this is and for you to express yourself openly to me.

M.

*Mark Beggs*

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