

DATE: February 28, 2022
TO: Wellesley COA Patrons, Volunteers, Instructors and Presenters
FROM: COA Board
RE: Wellesley COA Vaccine and Mask Policy

Since the Tolles Parson Center re-opened during the pandemic, the Board and Staff have considered all possible ways of promoting use of COA programs, functions, and services along with effective safeguards against serious illness from COVID-19. Scientific data indicates that wearing masks and being vaccinated and boosted are the most effective means to be protected from serious illness and to shorten the duration of the health emergency.

The COA exists specifically to serve the most vulnerable age group, those aged 60 and over. Recognizing that isolation during the pandemic was harmful, the Board refined its goals to provide the lowest risk possible for patrons to socialize and stay engaged. Upon learning that the COA could legally impose stricter conditions for non-employees, the Board quickly began to explore those options.

Over the past several weeks there have been numerous meetings, discussions, drafts, and most recently a survey and a Public Hearing to refine our thinking and to reflect upon the opinions of patrons. Statistics from the COA survey about a vaccine requirement indicate that of the 237 respondents, 83% were in favor of a vaccine requirement, 10% were not, and the rest were unsure or it didn't matter. Most recently the Wellesley Board of Health announced it is removing its Mask Mandate in public buildings as of March 7th.

With the overwhelming preference for a vaccine requirement, the Board moved towards supporting the requirement. However, it made little sense to require a vaccine policy while lifting a mask requirement. Therefore, the Board voted both to institute the vaccine requirement as of March 2nd, the day after the TPC will be used as an election polling site, and to continue the mask requirement that would have otherwise been lifted on March 7th. The expectation at this time is to continue with conservative requirements until Governor Baker lifts the Public Health Emergency. *The Policy Regarding Covid-19 Vaccine and Mask Requirements for Attendance at COA Functions and Programming* is attached to this letter.

The precise infectious rate is somewhat unknown now since so many people test at home and those results are not necessarily shared with health officials. Our intent is to offer a LOW risk environment for our most vulnerable age group to socialize and stay active as well as to encourage vaccination protection for less chance of serious illness, hospitalization, and death. There is no such thing as a NO risk environment outside of isolation. This virus can still be transmitted from and to vaccinated people, but with these requirements in place, the risk is as low as we can make it.

This policy will not adversely impact our programming, and all services will be maintained. This is a policy for non-employees attending COA functions and programs at the TPC. Employees, delivery people, maintenance workers, voters, etc., are not subject to this policy. Note that there is a medical exemption to this policy. Unvaccinated elders without a medical exemption can still take the COA Bus to locations other than the Council on Aging. If you are unsure of your particular situation, please call ahead for information.

A greeter or staff member will assist you upon your arrival. Acceptable forms of proof of vaccinations are stated in the policy. Our hope is that this policy will encourage patrons to use the COA more comfortably as we emerge from this pandemic. The COA is here to serve you!

Wellesley COA Board

Marlene Allen, Chair

POLICY REGARDING COVID-19 VACCINE AND MASK REQUIREMENTS FOR ATTENDANCE AT COA FUNCTIONS AND PROGRAMMING

Due to the following:

- The Commonwealth of Massachusetts remains under a Public Health Emergency as declared by Governor Charles Baker due to the COVID-19 pandemic;
- The virus is particularly serious and deadly to susceptible populations such as those over the age of 60; and
- The available vaccines have been proven to date to protect against infection, to mitigate the symptoms if a vaccinated person contracts the illness, and to decrease the risk that the virus will be transmitted to others;

The Council on Aging adopts the following policy.

1. All COA patrons, volunteers, and instructors/presenters who wish to participate in activities or programs at the Tolles Parsons Center must provide proof of vaccination against the COVID-19 virus, commencing on March 2, 2022, and continue the mask requirement beyond March 7, 2022.
2. Proof of up to date vaccination (which includes boosters) must be shown to a staff member or volunteer greeter upon entry to the Tolles Parsons Senior Center.
3. Proof of up to date vaccination must be in the form of the paper CDC card (or copy), a digital photo of the CDC card, or a current electronic form. In the event that COA patrons, volunteers, or instructors/presenters forget the aforementioned proof at their time of entry, they must sign an attestation form confirming they are up to date with their vaccinations.
4. A medical exemption may be approved by a manager upon receiving a note from a medical professional to support the request. There will be no religious exemption.
5. Failure to comply with this policy will result in denial of admission.

This policy is subject to revision due to the evolving nature of the pandemic.

Adopted this 24th day of February, 2022 .

COUNCIL ON AGING