



POLICY POSITION

IMMUNIZATIONS

2021 BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND ADVOCACY COMMITTEE

The Delaware Nurses Association (DNA) has served all Delawareans for over 100 years with a focus on restoring optimal health, alleviating suffering, and preventing illness and diseases through the art and science of nursing. The reduction or elimination of vaccine-preventable diseases is one of the greatest public health achievements of the United States (CDC, 2011). This policy position statement related to **immunizations** was created and approved to guide nurses, employers, health systems, and public health officials in the application of policies to protect those we serve and each other from vaccine-preventable diseases.

STATEMENT OF DNA POSITION

The DNA supports policies that mandate “all individuals receive immunizations against vaccine-preventable diseases according to the best and most current evidence outlined by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP),” in line with the [American Nurses Association \(ANA\) Position Statement on Immunizations](#). All health care personnel (HCP), including Licensed Practical, Registered, and Advanced Practice Registered Nurses should be vaccinated according to current recommendations for immunization of HCP by the CDC, ACIP, and Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology (APIC).

Nurses are the most trusted and largest sector of all health-related, licensed professionals. We possess an ethical and professional obligation to those we serve to provide care and knowledge aligned to the best available evidence and owe the same duties to ourselves.

DNA does not support any exemptions from immunization other than for medical contraindications. All requests for medical exemption from vaccination should be accompanied by documentation from the appropriate authority to support the request. Recertification of medical exemption is an annual obligation. Individuals exempted from vaccination may be required to adopt measures or practices in the workplace to reduce the chance of disease transmission. Employers should offer reasonable accommodations in such circumstances. DNA does not endorse philosophical or religious exemptions.

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STATEMENT RELATED TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Due to highly contagious variants, including the Delta variant, and significant numbers of unvaccinated people, COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations, and deaths are once again rising throughout the United States (CDC, 2021). Delaware's weekly new positive cases continue to trend upward (State of Delaware, 2021).

DNA strongly recommends that all nurses, HCP, and the public be vaccinated against COVID-19. DNA does not support any exemptions other than for medical contraindications to being vaccinated against COVID-19.

THE PUBLIC

"Current evidence and research illustrate that immunizations are essential to the primary prevention of disease from infancy throughout adulthood. According to the current recommendations of the CDC and ACIP, effective vaccination programs for children and adults promote and maintain the health of the populace, and include obtaining the annual seasonal influenza immunization, another vaccine-preventable disease. Between 2010 and 2018, the number of deaths annually from influenza is estimated to be from 12,000 to 79,000, with many more people hospitalized due to the severity of symptoms" (ANA, 2021).

ETHICAL DUTY

The ANA Code of Ethics for Nurses (the Code) defines expectations related to the primary goals, values, and obligations of our profession. ANA and DNA believe that the Code is nonnegotiable and that each nurse has an obligation to uphold and adhere to its ethical precepts.

There are five provisions within the Code that speak to the obligation of nurses to act in a manner that is consistent with evidence-based, scientific recommendations to maintain patient and personal health:

- Provision 2: The nurse's primary commitment is to the patient, whether an individual, family, group, community, or population.
- Provision 3: The nurse promotes, advocates for, and protects the rights, health, and safety of the patient.
- Provision 4: The nurse has authority, accountability, and responsibility for nursing practice; makes decisions; and takes action consistent with the obligation to promote health and to provide optimal care.
- Provision 5: The nurse owes the same duties to self as to others, including the responsibility to promote health and safety, preserve wholeness of character and integrity, maintain competence, and continue personal and professional growth.

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- Provision 6: The nurse, through individual and collective effort, establishes, maintains, and improves the ethical environment of the work setting and conditions of employment that are conducive to safe, quality health care.

(ANA, 2015)

Our ethical duties proliferate due to the public's sustained ratings of nurses as the most honest and ethical professionals, now 19 years running (Saad, 2020). This ethical duty permeates in all facets of public health, disease prevention, alleviation of suffering, and health promotion. "Public trust will be damaged if [nurses] appear to suggest vaccines for others but avoid them for themselves" (Galanakis et al., 2013).

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