

New vaccine requirement for healthcare workers causes concern during shortage

by: [Stephanie Chavez](#)
Posted: Aug 18, 2021

[SANTA FE, N.M.](#) (KRQE) – Under the [new health order](#), New Mexico healthcare workers are required to be vaccinated, but some lawmakers are concerned that the mandate will make our healthcare shortage even worse. Last week the state’s top doctor talked about the nursing shortage in New Mexico, even asking retired nurses to help in the fight against COVID. One state senator says he’s worried the new mandate will cause even more doctors and nurses to jump ship.

“Vaccine requirements are now for all hospital and congregate care workers,” said Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham, during a press conference on Tuesday afternoon. That new mandate is raising some concern from Republican State Senator, Gregg Schmedes. “We need to be working together right now instead of shunning and pushing these people away,” said Senator Schmedes.

Schmedes, a surgeon himself, says the shortage of healthcare workers in New Mexico is already a major problem. He says the new vaccine requirement is enough for some doctors and nurses to quit, predicting hospitals that are already spread thin, will become even more overwhelmed. “When you drive certain people, push them out of the state, it’s really going to cause a dangerous situation,” said Senator Schmedes.

But, the President of the New Mexico Nurses Association disagrees. Gloria Doherty, a registered nurse, and a nurse practitioner says patients deserve vaccinated healthcare providers. “We are obligated to make sure we’re providing safe care to them,” said Doherty.

While she admits the healthcare worker shortage is very real in New Mexico, she does not believe the new rule will cause a mass exodus of healthcare providers. “This is about science,” said Doherty. “This is about medicine, this is about stopping the surge of the Covid pandemic and decreasing the number of unnecessary deaths,” she said.

UNMH says they have a high vaccination rate among their employees, but they were unable to tell KRQE News 13 exactly how many. The new mandate also includes long-term living facilities like nursing homes. As of last Wednesday, about 80-percent of staff at New Mexico assisted living facilities had been vaccinated.