



October 1, 2021

**A letter from the CEO regarding COVID-19 and the agency's vaccine mandate:**

***Thank you for your interest in employment at Starfish Family Services***

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Dear Prospective Starfish Employee,

Thank you for your interest in a rewarding career at Starfish Family Services. We are steadfast advocates for the families and children of metro Detroit and seek a just society in which all children, families and communities have equitable opportunities to grow, learn, and thrive.

As you consider next steps with Starfish, it is important to acknowledge the impacts of the global pandemic on our daily operations and the ever-changing environment within which we are working.

Since March of 2020, when the pandemic first arrived in Michigan, Starfish has been committed to doing everything possible to keep our employees, children & families, and communities safe. Keeping people safe has been something we've had to continuously learn about and adjust. We have leveraged data and health expert guidance in making all decisions. No two days in the pandemic have been the same. Yet, Starfish has been committed to consistent, timely, and transparent communication with our valued employees as part of our response management. We pride ourselves on a core agency value – to be reflective – related to the pandemic and our regular decision making.

With a robust series of investments and protocols (including/not limited to: mask wearing, social distancing, handwashing, health screening tools, facility updates, contact tracing, a portion of services available virtually, and quarantine protocols), we have maintained our commitments to employees, families, and children around safety. We have not had any identified positive cases that are traced back to known exposure at Starfish.

Since January 2021, we have offered numerous opportunities for employees to get vaccinated, and we continue to provide accessible education and forums where employees and clients alike can gain information and insight about available vaccinations. Currently, more than 70% of our employees are fully vaccinated.

As we look to the future, we know that we must continue to make decisions that are centered in the continued goal of safety for all.

With unanimous support from the Starfish Board of Directors, on September 29, Starfish announced an agency-wide COVID-19 vaccine mandate with a deadline for all employees to complete the vaccination process and verify their status with Starfish by 5pm on November 12.

If you would like a copy of the vaccine mandate document to review, please ask your HR partner. As of October 4, all new hires must:

- **(A)** Already be fully vaccinated in advance of starting employment, OR
- **(B)** Complete a single-dose vaccine – or – the first shot of a two-dose vaccine by their first day at Starfish; those pursuing a two-dose vaccine have 30 days to complete the process.

Some additional contexts on this decision and mandate are outlined below:

- We believe vaccinations are an essential and safe community-level strategy for saving lives and combating COVID-19.
- The Pfizer COVID-19 vaccination is now fully approved by the CDC.
- Thousands of Starfish clients do not have the choice to get vaccinated at this time (children under the age of 12). Children and young people are uniquely vulnerable and still deserve safe access to education and health supports in-person to thrive.
- Along with many of our partner organizations who have also implemented vaccine mandates, the federal government has announced vaccine mandates for workplaces with 100+ employees and all Head Start partners starting in January of 2022 – this includes every Starfish employee.

We have clear procedures for employees to seek vaccine exemptions related to health or religion. Please let your HR partner know if you need support to seek an exemption. All requests will be reviewed and considered but are not guaranteed for approval.

We offer this information to you to demonstrate our commitments to both safety and transparent engagement with our employees. Also, to ensure you are making an informed decision about moving forward in your career exploration and the culture and community you may join.

We are one amazing Starfish community – focused on the strengths, hope, resilience, and love of the families and children we serve every day. We work with focus, believe in the power of teamwork, connect authentically, and navigate through challenges and celebrations together. This has been one of the most challenging eras in our shared work and individual careers. I am also immeasurably proud of the resilience and creativity that has poured out of Starfish – knowing that, perhaps more than ever before – children and families have needed for us to be a steadfast supporter and ally in their lives. We will remain unwavering in our commitment to be nimble in our response to the pandemic and centered in the health of our teams, clients, and neighborhoods.

I again thank you for your interest in Starfish and look forward to welcoming you soon.

Sincerely,

Ann Kalass, Chief Executive Officer