

LEGAL UPDATE

Supreme Court Rejects Religious Challenge to NYC's Vaccine Mandate for Public Schools

On Feb. 11, 2022, the U.S. Supreme Court issued an [order](#) denying a request by a group of teachers and school administrators to be exempt, on religious grounds, from New York City's (NYC) COVID-19 vaccination requirement for all in-person public school workers.

The court previously rejected a similar request filed by the same group in September 2021. The court has also rejected similar challenges to [New York's statewide vaccine mandate for health care workers](#) (Dec. 13, 2021) and [Maine's vaccine mandate for health care workers](#) (Oct. 29, 2021). Because all of these cases were brought on an emergency basis, the court's orders did not include an explanation.

Background of NYC Vaccination Mandate

Beginning Sept. 27, 2021, [the NYC mandate at issue](#) requires all in-person teachers and other public school workers to be vaccinated against COVID-19. While many similar orders and laws grant exceptions for medical reasons, religious reasons or both, the NYC mandate does not allow any exceptions.

Supreme Court Case

NYC public school employees sued the city to block it from enforcing the COVID-19 vaccine mandate against them due to their religious beliefs. After lower courts declined, the Supreme Court also refused to block the law.

Employer Impact

The upheld mandate only covers NYC employees and volunteers who work in school settings. Private employers should become familiar with [guidance on federal fair employment laws](#) issued by the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, along with all applicable local, state and federal laws on vaccine mandates and religious exceptions.

Highlights

NYC Vaccine Mandate

A local mandate first issued in September 2021 requires in-person public school workers to be vaccinated against COVID-19.

Supreme Court Decision

On Feb. 11, 2022, the U.S. Supreme Court refused to block the city from enforcing the mandate against a group of teachers that challenged it.

No Religious Exceptions

The NYC mandate for workers in public schools does not allow exemptions for religious beliefs.

Public schools in NYC must ensure teachers and other staff receive the COVID-19 vaccine despite any religious objections.

Provided to you by [Relation Insurance Services](#)

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