

Protesting against California's vaccine mandate

August 14, 2021



Demonstrators gathered outside Sutter Coast Hospital in Crescent City on Monday to protest the state's vaccination mandate for healthcare workers.

Last week, the California Department of Public Health became the first state public health department in the nation to mandate vaccines for health care workers, including those in hospitals, skilled nursing facilities, clinics, doctor's offices and other places. According to the August 5 order, health care workers must show proof of vaccination against COVID-19 by Sept. 30 or get a medical or religious exemption.

Anna Holmes is a nurse at Sutter Coast — she also was a co-organizer of the demonstration outside the hospital on Monday.

"It's not anti-vax, that's not our purpose. Our purpose is that it's a choice; to choose what you want put into your body," said Holmes. "It's about freedom, not force."

Holmes said she is not a COVID-19 denier, but does not trust the vaccine yet because it has not been fully approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. The FDA has granted emergency use authorization for

several vaccines, including the Pfizer, Moderna and Johnson and Johnson.

Holmes recognized Sutter Coast was limited by the state's mandate but said the hospital could potentially help provide medical and religious exemptions for employees who do not want the shot.

"Hospitals need to stand up and fight with their employees... Yes, their hands are tied, but as a corporation they can probably figure out ways to protect their staff," said Holmes.

Sutter Coast did not immediately respond to a request for comment for this story. However, in a Tuesday press release CEO Mitch Hanna announced they would be activating the hospital's surge plan — postponing non-emergency surgeries and restricting visitor access — due to increased cases and COVID-19 hospitalizations.

"Current case levels are driving some of the highest surge levels to date, requiring emergency response efforts. It's going to take all of us working together to reduce the spread of illness and slow down the rate of infection. We must be vigilant – wear a mask, practice good hand hygiene, avoid large gatherings and get vaccinated. Vaccination against COVID-19 is still the most effective way to prevent serious illness and death from the virus," according to the release.

As of Tuesday, the county reported 27 new cases of COVID-19, bringing the active case total to 191. Among those cases, 17 are hospitalized. There were 294 cases reported in the last two weeks, and there have been 1,946 total cases and 10 deaths linked to the virus since the beginning of the pandemic. As of August 5, 40.9% of county residents were fully vaccinated, and 5.8% were partially vaccinated, according to the data from the Del Norte County Public Health Department.