

# COMPASS



## Vax

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Lee also explained that all agencies that operate "Health Care Settings" — a designation that includes mobile clinics or other vehicles where health care is delivered, such as the kinds operated by VIFR — must enforce compliance with the vaccination requirement.

Krimmer is one of Vashon's most visible and highly paid public servants, with an annual base salary of \$162,750.

Notably, as VIFR's chief, Krimmer has served as Incident Commander of Vashon's response to the pandemic. In that capacity, he has overseen the efforts of the island's Emergency Operations Center (EOC) Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) and Medical Reserve Corps (MRC), including the standing up of the island's COVID vaccination and testing sites. The EOC and MRC have repeatedly urged all eligible islanders to become vaccinated, citing the efficacy and safety of the vaccines and the public health benefits of vaccination.

Currently, 83% of islanders 12 and older are fully vaccinated against the virus, and 93% have received one dose of the vaccine.

### Mandate also impacts local healthcare, long-term care providers

Kerry Barnes, who is the health care administrator at Vashon's Sea Mar clinic, said that most but not all of the clinic's workers are currently vaccinated. However, she added that all those who are currently unvaccinated have now agreed to get the shots in time to meet the mandate's deadline.

Wendy Kleppe, executive director of Vashon

Community Care, also said that VCC's staff was mostly but not 100% vaccinated; she declined to give a number of unvaccinated workers.

"We're working really hard to educate our staff on the benefits of staff and residents being fully vaccinated," Kleppe said, adding that VCC has strong protocols in place including routine testing and PPE requirements for all staff members.

She also said she expected that the union representing VCC's workers, Service Employees International Union (SEIU), would play a role in discussions with workers regarding vaccine mandates. Kleppe expressed deep gratitude to islanders who had supported VCC throughout the pandemic and said that Vashon's MRC had played an especially important role in supporting her organization. Vashon's overall high vaccination rates, she said, had protected VCC staff and residents, and VCC had, in turn, worked ceaselessly to keep staff and residents safe as well.

"We know the vaccine has been a critical factor in keeping our community healthy," she said. "So taking the next step and making vaccinations a condition of employment just makes sense."

The vaccination campaign for the island, she said, began at VCC.

"We were the first ones on the island putting shots in arms," she said.

Vashon Natural Medicine will not be impacted by the vaccination mandate, said Dr. Kelly Wright, who is the founder of the clinic.

"Our entire staff is vaccinated, and has been since the moment the COVID vaccine was available," she said. "We are all exceedingly thankful that the COVID vaccine exists, and believe it is imperative for all health care workers to

be vaccinated. Everyone who can, should be vaccinated for themselves and the safety of others."

### Vaccination policies at other local businesses

Other employers on Vashon are also dealing with the issue of staff vaccinations, even though their businesses are not included in the governor's mandate.

Vashon Center for the Arts, which employs more than a dozen staff members as well as hires numerous local artists and educators on a contract basis, last week announced that all VCA employees, board members and volunteers who work in VCA buildings must be vaccinated by Sept. 6 or provide documentation for an exception on medical or religious grounds. Those who receive those exemptions will need to present a negative COVID test on a weekly basis to the arts center.

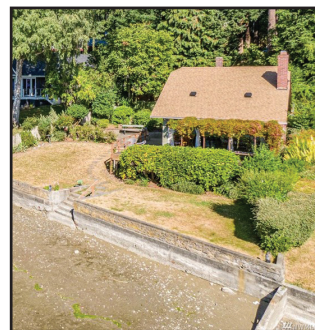
Several members of VCA's staff are affected by the decision.

Allison Halstead Reid, VCA's executive director, said that the potential departure of these staff members would be difficult for VCA's entire, close-knit TEAM. She said that the affected employees had been diligent about following safety protocols in their work, including masking.

"There is no 'win' in this situation," Halstead Reid said. "The loss to VCA will be felt deeply if we have to scramble to fill their roles, not to mention the loss for them in not having wages."

Halstead Reid explained that calculations for performance venues were rapidly evolving throughout the county and in Seattle. Some major performance venues in Seattle, including Seattle Theatre Group, have recently announced policies that audience members must show proof

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