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New York Gov. Kathy Hochul speaks at the New York State Capitol in Albany, New York, on Aug. 24, 2021. (Michael M. Santiago/Getty Images)

## NY NEWS

# New York National Guard May Replace Unvaccinated Health Care Workers: Governor

By [Jack Phillips](#) | September 26, 2021 Updated: September 27, 2021

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[New York](#) state might resort to using National Guard members to replace health care workers who haven't received the [COVID-19](#) vaccine.

In a statement on Sept. 25, Gov. Kathy Hochul, a Democrat, said that options to deal with hospital staffing shortages include deploying medically trained members of the National Guard. The situation would allow her to declare an emergency to increase the supply of health care workers to include licensed workers from other states, other countries, and retired nurses.

“We are still in a battle against COVID to protect our loved ones, and we need to fight with every tool at our disposal,” she said in a [statement](#). “I am monitoring the staffing situation closely, and we have a plan to increase our health care workforce and help alleviate the burdens on our hospitals and other health care facilities.”

According to her office, about 16 percent of the state’s 450,000 hospital staff members, or about 72,000 workers, haven’t yet been vaccinated.

Meanwhile, her office said that health care workers who are terminated after not getting the vaccine can’t receive unemployment insurance unless they’re able to provide a valid doctor-approved request. The statement made no mention of religious exemptions.

A federal judge based in Albany on Sept. 14 [temporarily ordered](#) New York state officials to grant religious exemptions to the state vaccine mandate.

The plaintiffs—including doctors, nurses, a medical technician, and a physician’s liaison—were facing termination, damage to their careers, and other losses unless they submitted to the vaccine mandate in contradiction of their religious beliefs, [the lawsuit said](#).

“What New York is attempting to do is slam shut an escape hatch from an unconstitutional vaccine mandate,” attorney Christopher Ferrara, Thomas More Society special counsel, said in a statement. “And they are doing this while knowing that many people have sincere religious objections to vaccines that were tested, developed, or produced with cell lines derived from aborted children.”

Hochul Health Commissioner Howard Zucker, and Attorney General Letitia James last week filed court documents arguing that the state doesn’t need to [require](#) religious exemptions.

“Reducing the number of unvaccinated personnel who can expose vulnerable patients to the potentially deadly disease in the healthcare setting is of utmost importance. Time is of the essence,” they argued in a court filing.

Days after the Albany judge blocked the mandate, a requirement for New York City school teachers and staff to receive the vaccine **was temporarily blocked** by an appeals court. The court set the next hearing date for Sept. 29.



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