

HR Insights

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Employer Steps for COVID-19 Vaccine Acceptance

Employers play a critical role in helping promote and provide accurate information about COVID-19 vaccines. Employees getting vaccinated can be a driving force for a safe return to work.

As employers navigate the legal risks and logistics of return-to-work plans and employee vaccinations, this article explores considerations for increasing employee vaccine acceptance across their organizations.

Building Employee Confidence

According to a Mercer survey, 82% of employers will encourage or strongly encourage employees to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. The remaining 18% of respondents say they'll only provide information and emphasize that vaccination is a personal choice.

Education and communication are critical for increasing COVID-19 vaccine acceptance—both inside and outside of the workplace. For that reason, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) offers [information](#) for workplace vaccination programs. Additionally, consider the following steps for increasing employee vaccination:

- Communicate proactively, compassionately and transparently to help build employee buy-in and support of workplace vaccination plans or general vaccination. Communications that lead with values, like unity or interconnectedness, are also effective because they can motivate employees to act.
- Educate employees about COVID-19 vaccines—including development, efficacy, benefits, side effects, access and coverage—and how they can talk to others about vaccines. Stick to the facts and avoid using jargon and strong language. To be most impactful, employers could leverage multiple organizational channels to reinforce vaccine messaging.
- Listen to employees' concerns about the COVID-19 vaccine. Two-way communication is especially important if the workforce is in different locations or working remotely.
- Offer flexible sick leave options for employees with signs and symptoms after vaccination. Employers may also offer paid time off for employees to get vaccinated.
- Invite organization leaders to make their decisions to get vaccinated visible and celebrate them. Reinforce that employees getting vaccinated against COVID-19 can accelerate return-to-work plans.
- Encourage employees to be vaccine champions. Going one step further, employers could appoint and train interested employees to become vaccination ambassadors who share their personal stories and address any co-worker concerns.

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- Discuss COVID-19 vaccines in workplace settings (e.g. town hall) where employees can ask questions and engage in respectful and open dialogues.
- Ask organizations and individuals who are respected in employee communities to help build confidence in COVID-19 vaccines.

Vaccine acceptance won't happen overnight, so allow time for that confidence to build. Employees who are hesitant at first may become more assured after co-workers, family and friends get vaccinated.

Remember that employers continue to play a big role in helping employees navigate the pandemic. Contact us today for additional resources about COVID-19 vaccines.