

COVID-19 Vaccine Roll-Out Cheat Sheet: Key Considerations for Employers

There's no doubt that the COVID-19 vaccine roll-out will be confusing. Each organization, beyond just the HR team, is going to have to make tough decisions for their business, their company culture, and their employees. They'll have to decide how to get their people back to work safely and appropriately.

Here are several considerations worth discussing to ensure the company is prepared for what's to come in the next phase of vaccine discussion:



Will a vaccine be mandated for people in your state?

At the end of October, each state was required to submit to the CDC [their own roadmap](#) of their vaccine plan, including distribution, prioritization, and mandates. In some states, such as Virginia for example, the Health Commissioner has authority to mandate immunizations during a public health crisis if a vaccine is available. Employers will be able to set up benefits to meet the applicable regulations, and so employers should be aware of [requirements in their particular state](#).



Will you mandate a vaccine for employees in certain job functions?

Employers also are seeking clarification as to what the vaccine means for their industry to open up as well as the implications for specific roles. Will airlines require employees and travelers to get the vaccine? Will proof of a vaccine be required to attend indoor events? Ticketmaster has mentioned this as a possibility recently to attend concerts, for example.



How will you continue to protect unvaccinated employees?

Because vaccines don't prevent the spread of viruses, vaccinated employees still are contagious if they contract COVID-19. It is wrong to assume that things can resume to pre-COVID operations until a large majority of the general population is vaccinated. High-risk employees who choose not to vaccinate, those who are allergic, and women who are pregnant remain at risk of exposure. Workplace precautions must be maintained for their protection.



How will you overcome vaccine hesitancy in your workforce?

[Vaccine hesitancy](#) refers to a person's delay in acceptance or refusal of vaccination despite availability of vaccination services. Despite the toll COVID-19 has taken, many people in the U.S. are concerned about a vaccine. Being cognizant of employee concerns is important to be able to address them in a timely and appropriate manner.



How will you balance vaccination costs with other benefits-related costs?

The COVID-19 vaccine will be managed in a similar manner to other preventative vaccines. In general, clients can choose to cover the administration cost through their medical and/or PBM pharmacy benefit. As established in the CARES Act, patients are to receive the vaccine at no out-of-pocket cost and no deductible, regardless of where they get the vaccine. Employer Group Waiver Plans (EGWPs) are able to allow coverage for the administration fees but would incur additional financial risk.



What communication and outreach will you do to support member adherence to the second vaccine dose?

Some PBMs and retail pharmacies are planning multi-pronged communications that include email, IVR, and text messaging to remind members about their second dose appointments. Employers should determine how they will support those efforts and relay messages using their established communication channels.