



Strategies to Increase COVID-19 Vaccination Rates in Senior Living Employee Populations

The business need – and population health need – of having larger percentages of vaccinated employees in the Senior Living industry is clear. Scott's *Senior Living Practice* recently hosted a webinar to provide a comprehensive overview of potential strategies to increase vaccination rates among employees of Senior Living organizations. Featuring speakers with a wide range of expertise, including medical, legal and risk perspectives, the webinar highlighted the need for vaccinated employees due to asymptomatic spread, addressed specific risk factors of the industry's employee population and provided timely guidance for employers.

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The webinar featured the following experts: [Meredith Berger, M.D.](#), founding partner of Virginia Diabetes & Endocrinology, P.C.; [Dina Fonzone](#), Vice President of Scott Health Risk Performance; [Alex Shaw](#), Scott Risk Performance Consultant; and [Kimberly Daniel, J.D.](#), Partner, Hancock Daniel.

Vaccination Acceptance Among Senior Living Staff

While the need for vaccinated employees is clear, staff vaccination rates are currently falling short of expectations for many Senior Living organizations. When asked about their expectations for employee vaccination rates prior to the vaccination process starting, more than **60% of respondents to a poll during our webinar said they expected vaccination rates above 60%**.

According to the [Centers for Disease Control](#), during the first month of the federal vaccine program, skilled nursing facilities that had at least one vaccine clinic saw an estimated median of **only 37.5% of staff received at least one dose**. According to an [executive survey](#) conducted by The National Investment Center for Seniors Housing & Care (NIC), the number of vaccinated staff in senior housing and skilled nursing facilities is just under 50%.

How Can Senior Living Employers Close the Vaccination Gap?

There is a continuum of vaccine acceptance and the majority of individuals are able to be influenced toward acceptance or refusal based on a number of factors. Our webinar addressed the following strategies many Senior Living employers are currently considering in hopes of boosting employee vaccination rates:

Mandates

Mandating vaccines is not a novel concept. Many employers in this industry have a history of mandating other vaccines, such as the flu vaccine, and many are considering how mandating COVID-19 vaccines might impact their workplace.

According to our webinar poll of Senior Living employers, **69% of respondents are currently considering requiring the vaccine as a condition of employment and 85% say they would consider mandating the vaccine once it is fully approved by the FDA**.

Incentives

Many employers are also considering various incentive programs to further encourage vaccines; however, **54% of our webinar poll respondents do not think an incentive of any amount would motivate employees to change their mind about getting vaccinated**.

Those who are considering mandating or providing incentives, should note that these programs must be implemented carefully to ensure compliance with various laws. Additionally, employers must consider the unintended cultural and financial consequences created by mandates and/or incentives.

At Scott, we encourage our clients to view their vaccination strategy as a part of a larger approach to health and risk management. As such, the following steps are a good place to start as you determine how your organization will approach encouraging your employees to get vaccinated:

1. **1. Don't assume your employees have the right information to make an informed vaccination decision. It is your responsibility to educate your employees with evidence-based information about the vaccine, including the risks, safety, efficacy and motivating factors of vaccination.**
2. **2. Encourage and/or provide counsel from medical providers.**
3. **3. Listen to objections, follow up with evidence-based information.**
4. **4. Treat employees with respect and sensitivity.**
5. **5. Lead by example.**

Legal Implications of Your Vaccination Strategy

Case law is developing and there are many unanswered legal questions and concerns for employers surrounding COVID-19 vaccinations. With various strategies employers could implement to encourage vaccination rates as well as other employment law implications, it is critical that Senior Living employer engage a qualified attorney to provide counsel as they develop and implement their policies and strategies surrounding vaccinations.

If you have questions about the risks and benefits of your organization's vaccination strategy, please contact a Scott Benefits Consultant or Risk Advisor. Scott is hosting another webinar on this topic on March 18 (not specific to Senior Living), you can register for this webinar by clicking on the button below.

Register For Scott's Upcoming Webinar:
Employing a Strategic Approach to the COVID-19 Vaccine in the Workplace