



On February 10, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued updated guidance stating that fully vaccinated persons who have been exposed to COVID-19 are no longer required to quarantine if they meet all of the following criteria:

- Are fully vaccinated (i.e.,  $\geq 2$  weeks following receipt of the second dose in a 2-dose series, or  $\geq 2$  weeks following receipt of one dose of a single-dose vaccine);
- Are within 3 months following receipt of the last dose in the series; and
- Have remained asymptomatic since the current COVID-19 exposure.

The guidelines provide that persons who do not meet all three of the above criteria should continue to follow current quarantine guidance after exposure to someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19.

Notwithstanding the ability to avoid quarantine, the CDC cautions that fully vaccinated persons who do not quarantine should still watch for symptoms of COVID-19 for 14 days following an exposure. In addition, all persons should continue to follow and maintain the same protective measures (i.e., distancing, mask-wearing, etc.) regardless of their vaccination status. Finally, the CDC's new guidance provided some additional considerations for patients and residents in healthcare settings.

## MANDATING VACCINATIONS

One of the most pressing questions regarding COVID-19 vaccines is whether employers may require employees to be vaccinated. Employees are understandably anxious and employers have not yet received much information from the government on potential guidance regulating vaccines in the workplace.

Here are four ways to discuss COVID-19 vaccinations in the workplace now, before the vaccines are more widely distributed to the public in 2021.

1. Educate your workforce on the COVID-19 vaccines. The amount of conflicting information on COVID-19 vaccines is staggering. Take the time to send out vetted facts to employees from the FDA and official sources. Encourage employees to speak to physicians about concerns.

2. Slow Down. The COVID-19 vaccine is not currently available to the general public and will not be widely available for several months. Take the time to calm down employees, while being sympathetic to their concerns. Talk about fears and issues surrounding the refusal to take a COVID-19 vaccine. If your company has an EAP program, distribute information regularly.

3. Recognize exceptions to mandatory vaccines. Even if you are considering a requirement that employees be vaccinated, it is important to remember that many individuals may not be subject to a mandatory vaccine policy. For example, persons with disabilities under the Americans with Disabilities Act may be exempt from vaccination requirements. Therefore, it is important for companies to engage in the interactive process early to determine whether reasonable accommodations are necessary. And some employees may be exempt for religious purposes.

4. Executives should start discussing the ramifications of mandatory COVID-19 vaccines. Employees want to know now if the COVID-19 vaccine will be mandatory, but before the company issues a policy, several considerations exist, such as:

- Will the company pay for the vaccine?
- If employees refuse to take the vaccine, will they be fired?
- Will employees refusing to take the vaccine be allowed to work at home while others are required to come to work?
- If employees have reactions or side effects, will the company compensate them for time off to recover?

Please contact us should you have any questions on this.