

# Leaders' Guide to Providing Employees with Equitable Access to Vaccines

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The coronavirus pandemic has caused the largest public health crisis in a century, with nearly [27 million cases](#) in the United States alone, resulting in the tragic deaths of more than 460,000 Americans and counting. COVID-19 has also upended our economy and society, with the loss of [9.8 million jobs](#) since last February, 55% of which were jobs that women held. Women of color have been [hit the hardest](#): out of the 2.1 million women who lost jobs in 2020, 564,000 were Black women and 317,000 were Latinx women.

Essential workers, who are the most at risk of contracting COVID-19, are disproportionately women of color, with Black women [earning](#) 62 cents for every dollar paid to men, Native American women 57 cents, and Latinx women 54 cents. [Essential workers who are mothers](#) are more likely to be women of color as well, which means additional child care expenses during school closures. Low-paid work coupled with caregiving costs in a global economic recession means that workers are struggling to make ends meet — even as they sustain greater illness and death.

The pandemic has made it all the more critical that vaccine distribution and recovery efforts are just, safe, and equitable. Realizing this vision requires the leadership of government, the healthcare industry, **and** employers.

Below is guidance prepared by [TIME'S UP Healthcare](#) and [TIME'S UP Impact Lab](#), outlining what employers should consider to ensure all Americans, especially those facing the greatest social and economic inequities, have access to vaccines and related care.

You can read the op-ed by Dr. Marina Del Rios, Chelsea Clinton, Dr. Judith Guzman-Cottrill, Dr. Esther Choo, and Dr. Aletha Maybank in *USA Today* [here](#).

## Provide work flexibility for vaccine appointments and potential side-effect recovery

Providing work flexibility, such as paid time off, shift accommodations, and work from home options, are critical steps in enabling all workers to receive vaccines. Some of the main issues with vaccination uptake include scheduling conflicts and cancelled appointments, which lead to [many valuable vaccines being wasted](#) as they expire quickly when left unused. Moreover, anticipating specific days off post-vaccination is not always easy given that the [onset](#) of side effects can last between one to three days and may be more severe after the second dosage. That's why it's important to create better work allowances, which will give workers the time

they need to receive their vaccines and recover from potential side effects between dosages.

The Biden administration's [American Rescue Plan](#) includes support for employers to provide extended sick leave, including time for employees to obtain the vaccine, and indicates government plans to compensate employers for such programs. Employers can use this guidance and the president's plan as a starting point, but do not need to wait for Congress to act. Instead, they should develop and tailor their own policies to match their workforce's specific needs.

## Provide remuneration for vaccine-related expenses to offset out-of-pocket costs

Though the vaccines themselves are free, workers will likely face related costs that could act as a financial barrier. These costs could include transportation to and from doctor visits and vaccination sites, lost wages like tips, child care expenses, and more. Employers can support their workforce through pre-tax COVID-19 vaccine stipends to compensate for lost wages or caregiving costs, credits for public transportation, local taxi companies, or rideshare apps, and reimburse workers for mileage and gas to and from vaccine appointments. Further, employers can encourage workers to use flexible spending accounts (FSAs) to [cover transportation costs](#) incurred while obtaining a vaccine.

Employers should do whatever they can to keep workers safe while offsetting inequitable financial burdens. Ultimately, such actions sustain the viability of all workers and the economy as a whole.

## Distribute credible, evidence-based vaccine information

Given the ever-changing information about COVID-19, and the general lack of clarity around vaccine logistics, companies should create a central repository of resources with readily accessible, up-to-date information from organizations like the [CDC](#). Employers and workers can also work together to identify and invite trustworthy medical experts, public health officials, and prominent community leaders to address any vaccine-related questions and concerns through online presentations and Q&A

sessions, facilitated web conferences, written newsletters, staff social channels, and other means of communication. Alternatively, employers can encourage their workforce to attend sessions hosted by local or state public health offices, health care systems, or universities. Employers should also disseminate information about obtaining the vaccine, including local vaccine locations, appointment registration, and what to expect post-vaccine.

One model for worker engagement is through the implementation of worker [health and safety councils](#). Nominated and elected by the workers, workplace monitors can partner with employers to design vaccine information sessions and can be empowered to ensure widespread dissemination of information about vaccine

logistics and aftercare. All information, whether educational or logistical, should be provided in many forms for different audiences – verbally, visually, online, and in writing – with your workers’ language fluency and [best practices](#) about health and adult literacy in mind.

## Consider on-site or satellite vaccinations

Depending on the chosen vaccine’s storage and handling needs, temporary or satellite sessions could either be on the company’s premises or at a nearby location – such as a school, movie theater, or restaurant outside of its normal operating hours. Such events should be optimally accessible to your employees and established in conjunction with local, state, and federal guidance, as well as government and nonprofit leaders to protect both those receiving and administering vaccines.

Employers should also consider vaccinating workers’ families if possible. Given the [caregiving crisis](#) that is driving women out of the workforce in record numbers, caregivers, the majority of whom are women, must consider their own health and safety, as well as their families’ well-being. The [CDC](#) provides additional guidance for planning ad-hoc vaccination clinics. Satellite clinics improve worker vaccine uptake, lower dose wastage, and boost morale by showing that employers are prioritizing the health of their workers and their loved ones.

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The path to creating a healthy, functioning society requires mass vaccination – and that includes the workforce. It will make the workplace safer, strengthen trust with customers, and decrease virus transmission in surrounding communities. Employer-based vaccine education and access programs will soon become the norm, and companies should aim to be at the forefront of setting industry standards. Employers wishing to maintain a high-performing workplace can lead the charge in ensuring that all workers, especially the ones most at risk, can receive the essential care that they need.

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