



SAFER

Safe Actions For Employee Returns

Recommended Actions for Vaccination Leadership and Expanded Operations

In our role assisting organizations in the initial stages of the COVID-19 vaccine rollout, the National Safety Council has held dialogues with hundreds of organizations and surveyed dozens of key stakeholders about vaccination leadership and expanded operations policies and practices. With the ultimate goal of keeping employees safe, this document lays out 10 critical recommended actions identified through our research and conversations with the employer, worker, and policymaker communities.

For additional resources, guidance, and tools to put these recommendations into action, including a newly revised SAFER Framework, visit nsc.org/safer or nsc.org/vaccine.

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Vaccination Leadership: Focus on the Moveable Middle

Increased vaccine uptake is essential to stop the spread of COVID-19 and expand operations for employers. While initial nationwide vaccination efforts have been successful, moving beyond this initial wave to reach community immunity will require the help of influencers around the country, particularly employers. Accessibility and convenience are some of the reasons given by individuals across demographics for not being vaccinated.¹ Employers are trusted above government officials on information related to COVID-19, which means their words and actions could have a significant, positive impact on vaccine uptake.²

These are the recommended strategies to help employers encourage participation in the vaccination effort, thereby increasing the safety of all workers and the ability to expand operations as quickly as possible.

1. **Provide Paid Time Off for Vaccination and Recovery** – remove financial or work/life balance barriers to access for those who have not yet received vaccinations by offering paid time off (typically 4 hours) per vaccine dose, as well as additional time for side-effect recovery, as necessary.
2. **Offer Scheduling and Transportation Support** – remove logistical barriers to access by offering administrative support in scheduling vaccine appointments and discount codes or reimbursement for taxi or ride-sharing services or fuel.
3. **Coordinate On-Site Vaccination Clinics** – remove convenience barriers by partnering with local health agencies or mobile vaccine units to coordinate on-site vaccination clinics, similar to annual flu vaccines.
4. **Encourage Peer-to-Peer Communication** – remove trust barriers by supporting peer-led sharing and conversations, engaging in an authentic conversation with those who have not yet received vaccinations with a focus on listening, acknowledging viewpoints and concerns, and leveraging positive stories.
5. **Contact State Officials** – express desire to support vaccination uptake by working with local elected officials.

Expanded Operations: Transition to the Future World of Work

Around 90% of NSC partners surveyed removed some or all employees from the traditional workplace, and approximately 65% of those have already returned some or all workers back to common work sites. The next round of employers to act will be those with remote workers or hybrid workers. To date, there is no universal employer guidance to manage the safety of a partially vaccinated workforce. With a federal emergency temporary standard on the horizon, NSC is providing the following guidance to help employers who are expanding operations today, while managing “return-to-normal” expectations for the future. As with any effort on this scale, significant planning and preparation is key, and particular attention must be paid to the needs of the workforce and the very real gaps in our predictive abilities.

6. **Take a Risk-Based Approach to Navigate a Partially Vaccinated Workforce** – the fact is, vaccines are the clearest route to a safe, productive return to the workplace. While the CDC has relaxed safety protocols, like mask wearing and social distancing, for fully vaccinated individuals, it does not take away the complexity of managing the safety of a partially vaccinated workforce. Employers should still take a risk-based approach based on their specific work environment to ensure the safety of all workers. In addition, employers must be prepared to verify the vaccination status of employees, while complying with appropriate employee and security laws and protocols. Further, employers should continue to create a safe, inclusive workplace culture where all workers, no matter their vaccination status, feel safe and supported.
7. **Collaborate and Communicate with Employees** – develop and coordinate any expanded operations efforts with a diverse and multi-disciplinary team that represents all the needs of the organization and includes employee participation. This approach will help ensure that the needs of one sector don’t inadvertently override the needs of another.
8. **Remain Flexible** – create a fit-for-purpose range of work approaches, including in-person, hybrid, and remote options that take into account workforce and business needs, while generating buy-in from workers and leaders at all levels of the organization. Approximately 90% of organizations NSC surveyed plan to account for flexible and remote work going forward.
9. **Monitor Worker Needs – Physical, Psychological, and Emotional** – strengthen resources and tools for and hone sensitivity to the full spectrum of worker needs, from mental health and wellbeing programs to supporting longer-term challenges related to work/life balance, grief, psychological safety, and social justice. In fact, 85% of NSC respondents are putting into place new programs or policies around work safety, wellbeing, or engagement because of COVID-19.
10. **Acknowledge the Unknown** – be honest about the fact that policies and procedures are only as good as our knowledge of the present state, and admit that changes may be possible in the future as new information comes to light, as safety recommendations change, or as laws and regulations shift.

¹ The Rockefeller Foundation | State & Territory Alliance for Testing: Vaccine Confidence Message Brief

² 2021 Edelman Trust Barometer