



**SAFER
STRONGER
TOGETHER**

HOLYOKE HANDBOOK



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Summary

The City of Holyoke has partnered with Archipelago Strategies Group (ASG) to launch an unprecedented project in the region to empower and encourage Holyoke businesses to get their employees vaccinated against COVID-19. The city is providing this handbook to assist, educate, inform, and promote business who get their employees vaccinated. Inside this document you will find various resources so that you as a business can become educated and informed to help get your employees vaccinated. This document also provides information to facilitate the process, such as information about vaccine and testing sites and grants and incentives available to financially assist businesses that are being proactive in getting their employees vaccinated.





Practical resources and contacts

Use the information within this portion to request a mobile vaccine clinic or point your employees to vaccination sites operating in Holyoke. These resources provide information to locate testing sites and resources.

Practical resources and contacts

Holyoke Board of Health	<p>The mission of the Holyoke Health Department is to enhance public health and safeguard the environment by assessing community needs and to provide prevention, protection, and educational resources to ensure the highest quality of life within the City of Holyoke.</p>	<p>https://www.holyoke.org/departments/board-of-health/ or (413) 322-5595</p>
State Mobile Vaccine Info	<p>Information on how to request a mobile vaccine clinic to come to your location, or current location of pop-up mobile clinics.</p>	<p>https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-mobile-vaccination-program</p>
Where to get Vaccinated (Vaxfinder)	<p>Find vaccination sites near you. (Locations, schedule, and status) SEE PAGE 2 FOR LOCATIONS</p>	<p>https://vaxfinder.mass.gov/</p>
Where to get Tested	<p>Find COVID-19 testing sites near you. (Locations, schedule, and info on when to get tested)</p>	<p>https://www.mass.gov/info-details/find-a-covid-19-test</p>
Holyoke Dedicated Testing Sites	<p>Dedicated testing sites. SEE PAGE 3 FOR LOCATIONS</p>	<p>https://transformativehc.com/stop-the-spread/</p>
In-home vaccinations	<p>In-home vaccinations are available for anyone who is unable to get to a vaccine location, including children 5-11 years old.</p>	<p>https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-in-home-vaccination-program</p>
Invite an expert to your workplace to answer questions at a meeting, either virtually or in person.	<p>Connect with a DPH vaccine ambassador –a public health professional experienced in community settings– by completing this form.</p> <p>Connect with a clinical expert –such as an infectious disease specialist, allergist or maternal health physician- by emailing VaccineEquityInitiative@mass.gov</p>	<p>https://www.mass.gov/forms/request-a-dph-vaccine-ambassador VaccineEquityInitiative@mass.gov</p>
Share Educational and awareness material throughout your workplace	<p>Use videos, flyers, and graphics, available in multiple languages, to help build trust in vaccine safety and efficacy.</p>	<p>https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-vaccine-education-and-outreach-materials</p>
Help employees get assistance for COVID-19 vaccination with transportation and more Testing Sites	<p>Services and assistance are available including transportation to and from appointments, translation services, mobility assistance, and more. Email VaccineEquityInitiative@mass.gov for more information.</p>	<p>VaccineEquityInitiative@mass.gov</p>



Practical resources and contacts

Holyoke Vaccine Sites

Retail Pharmacy

Stop & Shop (Lincoln Street)
28 Lincoln Street Holyoke MA 01040

Walgreens (Northampton St.)
1588 Northampton St. Holyoke MA 01040

Stop & Shop (Northampton St.)
2265 Northampton Street Holyoke MA 01040

CVS (Beech St)
400 Beech St Holyoke MA 01040

CVS (Whiting Farms Rd)
250 Whiting Farms Rd. Holyoke MA 01040

CVS (Holyoke St)
50 Holyoke Street Holyoke MA 01040

Holyoke Dedicated Testing Sites

Holyoke, MA

Holyoke Community College
303 Homestead Ave
Holyoke, Massachusetts 01040
Monday, Wednesday, Friday, Saturday: 7 a.m. - 11 a.m.
Tuesday, Thursday: 2 p.m. - 7 p.m.
Drive-through

Holyoke, MA

War Memorial
310 Appleton Street
Holyoke, Massachusetts 01040
Monday, Wednesday, Friday: 2 p.m. - 6 p.m.
Walk-up





Incentives and reimbursements for vaccine and COVID-19

Within this section you will find more information about incentives, reimbursement and grants available to help your business minimize financial loss due to COVID-19.

Incentives and reimbursements for vaccine and COVID-19

Incentives and reimbursements for vaccine and COVID-19 expenses

1. [FEMA Public Assistance Program Category B - FEMA Public Assistance Program](#) - FEMA provides supplemental financial assistance to state, local and tribal governments, and certain private non-profit organizations for emergency protective measures that may be eligible under FEMA's Public Assistance Program in accordance with the COVID-19 Emergency Declaration in order to ensure that resource constraints do not inhibit efforts to respond to this unprecedented disaster. The assistance FEMA provides through its PA Program is subject to a cost share. The Federal share is 100% of the eligible costs.
2. [MEMA Fall 2021 Webinar Series - FEMA Public Assistance](#)
3. [APHC Infographics](#)
4. [American Rescue Plan - Help small businesses](#) - American Rescue Plan tax credits available to small employers to provide paid leave to employees receiving COVID-19 vaccines. [New fact sheet outlines details](#)
5. [Burial Expense Reimbursement](#)
6. [Where can I find emergency financial resources to help with COVID-19 hardships?](#)
7. [COVID-19 relief options](#)
8. [COVID-19 Temporary Emergency Paid Sick Leave Program](#)
9. [MGCC's COVID-19 Relief Grant Programs](#)



COVID-19 Vaccine Information

Within this section you will find FAQs and information about the vaccine. This information will help you educate and dispel any misinformation you or your employees may have regarding the vaccine.

COVID-19

Vaccine Information

About the COVID-19 vaccine

Vaccines are safe and are one of the best ways to protect yourself and those around you from getting sick from COVID-19.

The vaccine doesn't contain the virus that causes COVID-19, so it can't make you sick. You may experience mild side effects after getting the vaccine, but this is a sign that your body is learning how to protect you.

Massachusetts is vaccinating against COVID-19. Here are a few important things to know:

- The vaccine is **free**.
- Anyone who **lives, works, or studies** in Massachusetts can get a vaccine.
- You can get vaccinated even if you are undocumented. Getting a vaccine will not impact you or your family's immigration status. The Public Charge rule does NOT apply to getting the vaccine.

How the vaccine works

Vaccines help our immune system fight infections in the future. The COVID-19 vaccine will protect us from the virus that causes COVID-19 without having to get the illness.

The vaccine will help protect you by teaching your body how to recognize and fight the virus. The vaccine can help keep you from getting COVID-19, but even if you do get the virus, it can keep you from getting very sick.

Two approved COVID-19 vaccines, one from Moderna and one from Pfizer – are given in **two doses**, about three weeks apart. **You need both doses to be fully protected.** A third vaccine – Johnson & Johnson – requires only a single dose to be protected.

It takes a few weeks after the second dose to become fully protected. You may have a sore arm, aches, fatigue, or fever for a few days after getting the vaccine. These symptoms are a sign that your immune system is learning how to protect you from the virus.

Ensuring the vaccine is safe

COVID-19 vaccines available in Massachusetts are made by three companies: [Moderna](#), [Pfizer](#), and [Johnson & Johnson/Janssen](#). These vaccines were authorized by the Federal Food and Drug Administration only after they were shown to be safe and effective in studies (called clinical trials). The U.S. ensures that all vaccines are as safe as possible. Learn how the federal government is working to [ensure the safety of COVID-19 vaccines](#).

In Massachusetts, a group of infectious disease experts reviewed the safety of the COVID-19 vaccines. This workgroup [confirmed](#) that the COVID-19 vaccines authorized by the FDA are safe and effective.

COVID-19 Vaccine Information

The vaccine is safe even though it happened quickly

We understand the importance of being open and honest about the safety and development of the vaccine— especially for communities who have suffered consequences of medical mistreatment. The COVID-19 vaccine was developed quickly but all of the same safety steps were followed for this vaccine that are used for all vaccines.

Vaccine companies moved quickly because

- **They used existing research and information on coronavirus:** COVID-19 is part of a family of viruses that has been studied for a long time. The vaccine developers used this existing research to help develop the COVID-19 vaccine.
- **Governments funded vaccine research:** The United States and other governments invested a lot of money to help vaccine companies with their work. Working together with other countries also helped researchers move quickly.
- **Tens of thousands of people participated in vaccine studies:** Studies of the vaccine (called Clinical Trials) were conducted to prove the vaccine is safe and effective. Tens of thousands of people signed up for the studies, so companies did not need to spend a lot of time finding volunteers.
- **Manufacturing happened at the same time as the safety studies:** Vaccine companies started making the vaccine at the same time as studies were happening in hopes that it would be proven safe and effective. This meant vaccines were ready to be distributed once they were approved.

Since the vaccines were approved, **millions of people of different races and ethnicities have been vaccinated**, and most have only experienced mild side effects.

Most Common Myths and Learn the Facts

MYTH: The ingredients in COVID-19 vaccines are dangerous.

FACT: Nearly all the ingredients in COVID-19 vaccines are also ingredients in many foods – fats, sugars, and salts.

Exact vaccine ingredients vary by manufacturer. Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines also contain messenger RNA (mRNA) and the Johnson & Johnson/Janssen COVID-19 vaccine contains a harmless version of a virus unrelated to the virus that causes COVID-19. These give instructions to cells in your body to create an immune response. This response helps protect you from getting sick with COVID-19 in the future. After the body produces an immune response, it discards all the vaccine ingredients just as it would discard any information that cells no longer need. This process is a part of normal body functioning. COVID-19 vaccines do NOT contain ingredients like preservatives, tissues (like aborted fetal cells), antibiotics, food proteins, medicines, latex, or metals. Learn more about what ingredients are and are not in [Pfizer-BioNTech](#), [Moderna](#), or [Johnson & Johnson/Janssen](#) COVID-19 vaccines.



COVID-19

Vaccine Information

MYTH: The natural immunity I get from being sick with COVID-19 is better than the immunity I get from COVID-19 vaccination.

FACT: Getting a COVID-19 vaccination is a safer and more dependable way to build immunity to COVID-19 than getting sick with COVID-19.

COVID-19 vaccination causes a more predictable immune response than infection with the virus that causes COVID-19. Getting a COVID-19 vaccine gives most people a high level of protection against COVID-19 and can provide [added protection for people who already had COVID-19](#). [One study](#) showed that, for people who already had COVID-19, those who do not get vaccinated after their recovery are more than 2 times as likely to get COVID-19 again than those who get fully vaccinated after their recovery.

All [COVID-19 vaccines](#) currently available in the United States are [effective](#) at preventing COVID-19. Getting sick with COVID-19 can offer some protection from future illness, sometimes called “natural immunity,” but the [level of protection](#) people get from having COVID-19 may vary depending on how mild or severe their illness was, the time since their infection, and their age. Getting a COVID-19 vaccination is also a [safer way to build protection](#) than getting sick with COVID-19. COVID-19 vaccination helps protect you [by creating an antibody response](#) without you having to experience sickness. Getting vaccinated yourself may also protect people around you, particularly people at increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19. Getting sick with COVID-19 can cause severe illness or death, and we can’t reliably predict who will have mild or severe illness. If you get sick, you can spread COVID-19 to others. You can also continue to [have long-term health issues after COVID-19 infection](#). Learn about why you should [get vaccinated even if you already had COVID-19](#).

MYTH: COVID-19 vaccines cause variants.

FACT: COVID-19 vaccines do not create or cause variants of the virus that causes COVID-19. Instead, COVID-19 vaccines can help prevent new variants from emerging.

New variants of a virus happen because the virus that causes COVID-19 constantly changes through a natural ongoing process of mutation (change). As the virus spreads, it has more opportunities to change. High vaccination coverage in a population reduces the spread of the virus and helps prevent new variants from emerging. CDC recommends that everyone 5 years of age and older get vaccinated as soon as possible. Learn more about [variants](#).

MYTH: All events reported to the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS) are caused by vaccination.

FACT: Anyone can report events to VAERS, even if it is not clear whether a vaccine caused the problem. Because of this, VAERS data alone cannot determine if the reported adverse event was caused by a COVID-19 vaccination.



COVID-19 Vaccine Information

Some VAERS reports may contain information that is incomplete, inaccurate, coincidental, or unverifiable. Vaccine safety experts study these adverse events and look for unusually high numbers of health problems, or a pattern of problems, after people receive a particular vaccine. Recently, the number of deaths reported to VAERS following COVID-19 vaccination has been misinterpreted and misreported as if this number means deaths that were proven to be caused by vaccination. Reports of adverse events to VAERS following vaccination, including deaths, do not necessarily mean that a vaccine caused a health problem. Learn more about [VAERS](#).

MYTH: The mRNA vaccine is not considered a vaccine.

FACT: mRNA vaccines, such as Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna, work differently than other types of vaccines, but they still trigger an immune response inside your body.

This type of vaccine is new, but research and development on it has been underway for decades. The mRNA vaccines do not contain any live virus. Instead, they work by teaching our cells to make a harmless piece of a "spike protein," which is found on the surface of the virus that causes COVID-19. After making the protein piece, cells display it on their surface. Our immune system then recognizes that it does not belong there and responds to get rid of it. When an immune response begins, antibodies are produced, creating the same response that happens in a natural infection. In contrast to mRNA vaccines, many other vaccines use a piece of, or weakened version of, the germ that the vaccine protects against. This is how the measles and flu vaccines work. When a weakened or small part of the virus is introduced to your body, you make antibodies to help protect against future infection. Learn more about how [mRNA COVID-19 vaccines](#) work.

MYTH: COVID-19 vaccines contain microchips.

FACT: COVID-19 vaccines do not contain microchips. Vaccines are developed to fight against disease and are not administered to track your movement.

Vaccines work by stimulating your immune system to produce antibodies, exactly like it would if you were exposed to the disease. After getting vaccinated, you develop immunity to that disease, without having to get the disease first. Learn more about the [ingredients](#) in the COVID-19 vaccinations authorized for use in the United States.

MYTH: Receiving a COVID-19 vaccine can make you magnetic.

FACT: Receiving a COVID-19 vaccine will not make you magnetic, including at the site of vaccination which is usually your arm.

COVID-19 vaccines do not contain ingredients that can produce an electromagnetic field at the site of your injection. All COVID-19 vaccines are free from metals. Learn more about the [ingredients](#) in the COVID-19 vaccinations authorized for use in the United States.



COVID-19 Vaccine Information

MYTH: COVID-19 vaccines authorized for use in the United States shed or release their components.

FACT: Vaccine shedding is the release or discharge of any of the vaccine components in or outside of the body and can only occur when a vaccine contains a live weakened version of the virus.

None of the vaccines authorized for use in the U.S. contain a live virus. mRNA and viral vector vaccines are the two types of currently authorized COVID-19 vaccines available. Learn more about [mRNA](#) and [viral vector](#) COVID-19 vaccines.

MYTH: COVID-19 vaccines can alter my DNA.

FACT: COVID-19 vaccines do not change or interact with your DNA in any way.

Both messenger RNA ([mRNA](#)) and [viral vector](#) COVID-19 vaccines work by delivering instructions (genetic material) to our cells to start building protection against the virus that causes COVID-19.

After the body produces an immune response, it discards all the vaccine ingredients just as it would discard any information that cells no longer need. This process is a part of normal body functioning.

The genetic material delivered by mRNA vaccines never enters the nucleus of your cells, which is where your DNA is kept. Viral vector COVID-19 vaccines deliver genetic material to the cell nucleus to allow our cells to build protection against COVID-19. However, the vector virus does not have the machinery needed to integrate its genetic material into our DNA, so it cannot alter our DNA. Learn more about [how COVID-19 vaccines work](#).

MYTH: A COVID-19 vaccine can make me sick with COVID-19.

FACT: Because none of the authorized COVID-19 vaccines in the United States contain the live virus that causes COVID-19, the vaccine cannot make you sick with COVID-19.

COVID-19 vaccines teach our immune systems how to recognize and fight the virus that causes COVID-19. Sometimes this process can cause symptoms, such as fever. These symptoms are normal and are signs that the body is building protection against the virus that causes COVID-19. Learn more about [how COVID-19 vaccines work](#).



COVID-19 Vaccine Information

Answering your questions about the COVID-19 Vaccine

Is the COVID-19 vaccine safe?

It was developed so fast. Yes. The U.S. makes sure that all vaccines are as safe as possible. Scientists developed the COVID-19 vaccines quickly, but still followed the same safety steps that are followed for all vaccines. Millions of people of different races and ethnicities have been vaccinated.

Will COVID-19 vaccines work against variants?

Yes. When viruses change, they are called variants. Studies suggest that the COVID-19 vaccines provide protection from current variants. Even if a vaccinated person gets infected with COVID-19, they will not get as sick as they would if they weren't vaccinated.

Can the COVID-19 vaccine give me COVID-19?

No. The COVID-19 vaccine does not contain the live virus. COVID-19 vaccines work by teaching your immune system how to fight the virus that causes COVID-19. Sometimes this can cause symptoms, such as fever. These symptoms are normal. They just are signs that your body is building protection against the virus.

Is it safe for me to get a COVID-19 vaccine if I would like to have a baby one day?

Yes. The CDC recommends a COVID-19 vaccine if you are trying to become pregnant now or might get pregnant in the future. There is no evidence that any vaccine causes fertility problems in women or men. This includes COVID-19 vaccines.

Can someone who is pregnant, or breastfeeding get a COVID-19 vaccine?

Yes. The CDC and American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists recommend COVID-19 vaccines for people who are pregnant or breastfeeding. COVID-19 infection during pregnancy increases the risk of severe illness and preterm birth. The benefits of getting a COVID-19 vaccine during pregnancy outweigh any possible risks. If you have questions, talk to your healthcare provider.





HIPAA FAQ

This portion is meant to educate businesses in how HIPAA may or may not apply to you and your employees. Within you will find FAQs as well as a description of the HIPAA privacy rule. In most cases you will notice that asking or requesting that your employees disclose if they are vaccinated is not a violation of HIPAA.

HIPAA FAQ

HIPAA PRIVACY RULE - WHAT EMPLOYERS NEED TO KNOW

One of the most important aspects of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) is its privacy protection. The law gave the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services the responsibility of adopting rules to help patients and other health care consumers keep as much of their personal information private as possible. The HIPAA privacy rule applies to “covered entities”, and even though employers are generally not covered entities, they are definitely affected by the rules applying to entities that are covered. The HIPAA privacy rule Web site from HHS (<https://www.hhs.gov/hipaa/index.html/>) has much guidance on the rule, including a very lengthy Q & A section that attempts to cover the privacy rule from the standpoint of covered entities, employers, health care consumers, health care providers, and other interested parties.

The Privacy Rule **does not apply** when an individual:

- Is asked about their vaccination status by a school, employer, store, restaurant, entertainment venue, or another individual.
- Asks another individual, their doctor, or a service provider whether they are vaccinated.
- Asks a company, such as a home health agency, whether its workforce members are vaccinated.

Other state or federal laws address whether individuals are required to disclose whether they have received a vaccine under certain circumstances.

Does the HIPAA Privacy Rule prohibit an employer from requiring a workforce member to disclose whether they have received a COVID-19 vaccine to the employer, clients, or other parties?

No. The Privacy Rule does not apply to employment records, including employment records held by covered entities or business associates in their capacity as employers. Generally, the Privacy Rule does not regulate what information can be requested from employees as part of the terms and conditions of employment that an employer may impose on its workforce. However, other federal or state laws do address terms and conditions of employment. For example, federal anti-discrimination laws do not prevent an employer from choosing to require that all employees physically entering the workplace be vaccinated against COVID-19 and provide documentation or other confirmation that they have met this requirement, subject to reasonable accommodation provisions and other equal employment opportunity considerations. Documentation or other confirmation of vaccination, however, must be kept confidential and stored separately from the employee’s personnel files under Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Does the HIPAA Privacy Rule prohibit a covered entity or business associate from requiring its workforce members to disclose to their employers or other parties whether the workforce members have received a COVID-19 vaccine?

No. The Privacy Rule does not apply to employment records, including employment records held by covered entities and business associates acting in their capacity as employers. Thus, the Privacy Rule generally **does not** regulate what information can be requested from employees as part of the terms and conditions of employment that a covered entity or business associate

HIPAA FAQ

may impose on its workforce, such as the ability of a covered entity or business associate to require its workforce members to provide documentation of their vaccination against COVID-19 or to disclose whether they have been vaccinated to their employer, other workforce members, patients, or members of the public.

For example, the Privacy Rule **does not prohibit** a covered entity or business associate from requiring or requesting each workforce member to:

- Provide documentation of their COVID-19 or flu vaccination to their current or prospective employer.
- Sign a HIPAA authorization for a covered health care provider to disclose the workforce member's COVID-19 or varicella vaccination record to their employer.
- Wear a mask--while in the employer's facility, on the employer's property, or in the normal course of performing their duties at another location.
- Disclose whether they have received a COVID-19 vaccine in response to queries from current or prospective patients.

Other federal or state laws address whether an employer may require a workforce member to obtain any vaccinations as a condition of employment and provide documentation or other confirmation of vaccination. These laws also address how employers must treat medical information that they obtain from employees. For example, documentation or other confirmation of vaccination must be kept confidential and stored separately from the employee's personnel files under Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Does the HIPAA Privacy Rule prohibit a doctor's office from disclosing an individual's protected health information (PHI), including whether they have received a COVID-19 vaccine, to the individual's employer or other parties?

Generally, yes. The Privacy Rule prohibits covered entities and their business associates from using or disclosing an individual's PHI (e.g., information about whether the individual has received a vaccine, such as a COVID-19 vaccine; the individual's medical history or demographic information) except with the individual's authorization or as otherwise expressly permitted or required by the Privacy Rule.

Generally, where a covered entity or business associate is permitted to disclose PHI, it is limited to disclosing the PHI that is reasonably necessary to accomplish the stated purpose for the disclosure.

NOTE: The Privacy Rule **does not** prohibit an individual from choosing to provide any of these individuals or entities with information regarding their vaccination status.

In general, the HIPAA Rules do not apply to employers or employment records. HIPAA only applies to [HIPAA covered entities](#) – health care providers, health plans, and health care clearinghouses – and, to some extent, to their [business associates](#). If an employer asks an employee to provide proof that they have been vaccinated, that is not a HIPAA violation, and employees may decide whether to provide that information to their employer.

Vaccines protect workers and help business reopen safely, and are available at no cost to



HIPAA FAQ

everyone in the United States age 12 and older. However, if you are unvaccinated and returning to work in person, there are steps you can take to [protect yourself and others in the workplace](#). Learn more about [workplace anti-discrimination laws and COVID-19](#) from the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). For other questions about COVID-19 and the workplace, check the [Department of Labor's website](#).

Additional HIPAA Information

Who Does HIPAA Apply to?

Perhaps the most common misconception about HIPAA is that it applies to all businesses and employers. It does not. The Privacy Rule governs only "covered entities":

- health plans;
- health care clearinghouses; and
- health care providers that conduct standard electronic transactions (and to some extent to certain business associates of covered entities).

If you do not fall into one of these categories, HIPAA does not apply to you at all. And even if you do fall into one of these categories, the Privacy Rule does not apply to employment records, including employment records held by covered entities or business associates "in their capacity as employers."

What Does the HIPAA Privacy Rule Protect?

The Privacy Rule regulates how and when covered entities are permitted to use and disclose PHI that covered entities create, receive, maintain, or transmit. The rule does not prohibit an employer or business, including HIPAA covered entities, from asking whether an individual has received a particular vaccine, including COVID-19 vaccines. The rule does regulate, however, how and when a covered entity may use or disclose information about an individual's vaccination status. Since most employers are not covered entities under HIPAA, the Privacy Rule does not regulate whether you can ask about an individual's vaccination status or how you can use or disclose that information once you have it.

But Isn't COVID-19 Vaccination Status Confidential Medical Information?

Yes. Documentation or other information regarding an individual's vaccination status is confidential medical information under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and some state privacy laws. This means that you must treat this information as confidential and store it separately from the employee's personnel file. The federal requirement to treat vaccination status as confidential information does not, however, prevent employers or businesses from asking their employees or their visitors whether they have been vaccinated against COVID-19. Note that some states, such as Montana, have enacted legislation restricting employers from asking employees and/or visitors about their vaccination status.



HIPAA FAQ

Bottom Line: Can We Ask Whether Employees and Customers Are Vaccinated?

Yes, HIPAA does not prevent employers and businesses from asking their employees and visitors whether they have been vaccinated against COVID-19 and for proof of such vaccination. Once you have the information, it must be treated as confidential, meaning that it is not shared with others except under limited circumstances and as noted, is not even kept in an employee's personnel file.

In the absence of state or local laws to the contrary, businesses can ask visitors to show proof of vaccination upon entering their facility without having to store the information at all. You should, however, consult your attorney regarding any state-specific constraints before acting in this manner.





Ideas to implement healthy conversations around vaccinations

COVID-19 and the vaccine have become a hot and controversial topic due to misinformation. This section will provide tips and guidance to best discuss and inform your employees about the vaccine.

Ideas to implement healthy conversations around vaccinations

Build Confidence in COVID-19 Vaccines

[Vaccine confidence](#) is the trust that employers, employees, their families, and healthcare providers have in:

- Recommended vaccines
- Providers who administer vaccines
- Processes and policies that lead to vaccine development, licensure or authorization, manufacturing, and recommendations for use

Build vaccine confidence by making confidence visible in your workplace. Follow these steps:

1. Discuss the vaccination policies with labor and management representatives. Use organizational leaders as role models and identify employees at any level in your workplace to be vaccine champions. These role models and champions should reflect the diversity of the workforce, especially those [disproportionately impacted](#). Invite the leaders and champions to share their personal reasons for getting vaccinated and remind employees why it's important to be vaccinated.
2. Communicate transparently to all employees about vaccination. See [Key Things to Know](#), [Frequently Asked Questions](#), and [Myths and Facts](#) for up-to-date information.
3. Create a communication plan. Share key messages with employees through breakroom posters, emails, and other channels. Emphasize the benefits of protecting themselves, their families, co-workers, and community. This [fact sheet](#) is available in numerous languages.
4. Provide regular updates on topics like the [benefits](#), [safety](#), [side effects](#) and [effectiveness of vaccination](#); clearly communicate what is and is not known.
5. Host physician or trusted provider Q&A sessions, especially inviting doctors or public health experts who reflect the race/ethnicity or cultural identity of the workforce. Your local health department may be able to provide a community health worker or *promotora* to visit your workplace and talk to your employees.
6. Make visible the decision to get vaccinated and celebrate it! Provide [stickers](#) for employees to wear after vaccination and encourage them to post selfies on social media.
7. Identify and foster partnerships with local public health departments or any other community or health-based organization to promote vaccination.



Ideas to implement healthy conversations around vaccinations

CDC created the [Workplaces and Businesses web page](#) to help employers protect their employees with a variety of tools, including vaccination. The web page includes information on COVID-19 vaccines, post-vaccination considerations for workplaces, and information on other preventive measures.

Additional Tips

Utilize credible messengers. Consider leaning on employees who have received the COVID-19 vaccine as ambassadors about their experience to others in your organization. That's a strategy being embraced by many businesses that allow credible employees to talk about their experience and current misconceptions from other employees.

Help Workers Find a Vaccine. Use vaxfinder to point your employees in the right direction. Or consider requesting the state mobile clinic or visiting a pop-up mobile site. Reference the Resources & Contacts table above for website URL and additional information. Give workers time off. Giving employees paid time off to get the vaccines—as well as time to recover from potential side effects—is a strategy many employers are embracing.

Other Resources

[Business Roundtable Launches 'Move the Needle' to Support COVID Vaccine Rollout, Encourage Continued Practice of Safety Measures](#)

[Will You Require Employees to Get a COVID-19 Vaccine?](#)

[Want to get workers vaccinated? Try these 6 strategies](#)

[In the news – COVID Collaborative](#)





Program Contact Information

If you require additional information or assistance, please reach out to any of the program points of contact.

Program Contact Information

Director of Health	Sean Gonsalves	gonsalvess@holyoke.org
Director of Operations and Logistics, Holyoke Emergency Operations Center	Rory Casey	caseyr@holyoke.org
Mayor of Holyoke	Josh Garcia	garciaj@holyoke.org
Executive Director, Holyoke Chamber of Commerce	Jordan Hart	jordan@holyokechamber.com
Director Office of Planning and Economic Development	Aaron Vega	vegaa@holyoke.org
Special Programs Manager, Holyoke Community Development	Kate Preissler	preisslerk@holyoke.org
State Representative, Fifth Hampden District	Patricia Duffy	patricia.duffy@mahouse.gov
Legislative Aide to State Representative Pat Duffy	Juan Anderson-Burgos	juan.anderson-burgos@mahouse.gov
Public Health Nurse for Holyoke	Deborah Schaiier	schaierd@holyoke.org



THANK YOU!

