

Perspective

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COVID-19 Vaccine Mandates: Onboarding and Tracking Considerations

With resignations hitting record highs, it is more important than ever to hang on to your new hires. Part of employee retention is providing a positive onboarding experience. Research shows, if you can create a great onboarding experience for your new hire, [69% of employees](#) will stay with the organization for three years. Unfortunately, onboarding at a new company is often fragmented and can result in what feels like a lot of paperwork, training, and completing administrative tasks. The average new hire is expected to complete [54 activities](#) during the onboarding process. On top of this, if your company has decided to implement a vaccine mandate, you are now looking at adding one more task: **tracking if your employees have been vaccinated.**

ANOTHER ONBOARDING TASK

Further complicating the potentially abundant disparate activities, on November 4, 2021, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) released its [Emergency Temporary Standard](#) for vaccine mandates. It included, among other things, a plan that all employers with 100 or more employees require their workforce to either be vaccinated or produce a negative COVID-19 test on a weekly basis. Chances are, your organization needs to start planning.

ONBOARDING IMPLICATIONS

One of the more challenging aspects of the onboarding process involves managing all the new hire notification requirements, including vaccine mandates, which can be difficult to track, yet must be implemented correctly to help protect your organization. Here are some things to keep in mind:



Potential Fines - When there are [more job openings than workers](#), many organizations may relax their onboarding requirements in an attempt to attract workers and hire with speed. If you are relaxing your organization's requirements, you could be moving into dangerous territory and be at risk for potentially significant fines. For example, many violations impose standard OSHA penalties of \$13,653 for a single violation or \$136,532 for willful actions.



Potential Loss of Government Contracts - While the vaccine mandate for federal contract workers is still being litigated, government contractors who do not comply with the vaccination mandate could lose their contracts with the federal government — and the states might not be far behind. Many states tie business licensing to E-Verify usage, so it isn't too much of a stretch to think they may consider this as well. And no one wants OSHA or any government agency "auditing" or "looking at" your records.



Taking Too Long - One of your priorities is likely onboarding employees quickly so they aren't looking at other offers out there. While this may seem a significant feat while staying compliant with requirements, there are ways you can help minimize the time spent by your new hire:

- Streamline or try to eliminate paper processes utilizing technology and integrations throughout the onboarding process.
- Develop an onboarding checklist for your team with automated tasks set-up to keep the process moving.
- Regularly review your current procedures to see if there are ways to streamline your onboarding process. In best practice, they should be reviewed every 6 months.

VACCINATION TRACKING

If your company is going to be implementing a mandate, here are a few things you may want to consider when recruiting and onboarding new talent:

**CLEAR COMMUNICATION**

- Your job posting should state that workers are required to be vaccinated to start work.
- Don't wait for day one to start communicating about these requirements.
- All job-related communications, including offer letters, should be clear about the mandate and require the employee to acknowledge the policy along with their pay, start date, etc.

**TIMING CONSIDERATIONS**

- Candidates may not need to be vaccinated to apply, but they might need to be fully vaccinated before their first day.
- Being "fully vaccinated" can take up to six weeks from their initial shot. Your organization may need to allow a longer onboarding time before their first day on the job for those who are unvaccinated.

**ATTESTATION DURING ONBOARDING**

- A vaccine attestation can be addressed in the same workflow as your other onboarding paperwork like I-9s, state required forms, and policies and procedures.
 - New York and California have already implemented notices that must be presented to new hires advising them of their rights if they contract COVID-19. Other states may soon follow suit.
 - Some states also require vaccinations in specific industries (Healthcare, Education, etc.). Be sure you are up-to-date with the laws in the states where you hire and the type of work performed.
- The new hire will need to attest they have received the vaccine and/or potentially upload a copy of their vaccination card. The details include:
 - Brand of shot(s)
 - Provider/location of shot(s)
 - Dates of shot(s)

**CENTRALIZE YOUR DOCUMENT RETENTION**

- Look to technology solutions. Spreadsheets and paper copies probably are not practical for requirements this important that could potentially lead to fines or penalties.
- When evaluating electronic ways for employees to attest to their status, try to find something user friendly for the employees as well as your HR team to help minimize disruption during this new requirement.
- Use a tool to generate employee reports so you can conduct regular internal audits of your documentation. This can assist with keeping you on track and help you identify issues before any potential audits.

If your organization needs help with vaccine attestation or other aspects of [onboarding](#), reach out to our subject matter experts from Equifax Workforce Solutions. For even more insights, subscribe to [The Workforce Wise™ blog](#) for updates, best practices, and tips you can use to enhance your onboarding process.

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