

Businesses Face Important Questions on the Road to a Vaccine

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It is generally recognized by public health experts that we will not return to a restriction-free normal until there is a widely available, safe and effective COVID-19 vaccine.

But even when a vaccine does become available - and remember, it's still not guaranteed there will ever be one - a COVID-19 vaccine will pose significant issues for employers, schools, and businesses, including:

- Can businesses require their employees to be vaccinated?
- Can schools (or the state) require all students and staff to be vaccinated?
- Will businesses have the option of providing on-site vaccinations for their employees?
- Will businesses incur any potential liability for providing or requiring vaccines?
- Should employers and businesses become involved in public awareness programs to promote the vaccine?
- Will vaccinated individuals be exempt from future quarantine requirements?

In addition, the potential liability of medical providers involved in a vaccination program will need to be addressed, as well as how to compensate individuals negatively impacted by a vaccine.

The questions quietly being asked now are sure to get louder as vaccination approval inches closer toward a reality, likely in (hopefully) 2021. At this point, it is difficult to predict how protective any approved vaccine will be. Therefore, we can continue to expect that restrictions on commercial and social activity will continue for a number of months. And restrictions will not magically disappear when a vaccine is approved since there will be a time lag between approval of a vaccine and the time it is widely available to the general public.

There is an old saying in the public health community that "Vaccines don't protect people. Vaccinations do." A vaccine will not be protective unless a majority of the country is willing or required to be vaccinated. Even if the public is receptive to a new vaccine, rolling out a nationwide vaccination program will be a massive logistical operation. The success of such a program is dependent on overcoming significant manufacturing, distribution and ethical hurdles. It is also expected that a vaccination program will be rolled out in phases, with those at high risk and frontline medical workers being the first in line to be vaccinated.

Unfortunately, there is a significant risk that vaccines, like mask-wearing, will become highly politicized. This country already has a significant anti-vaccination movement. Public willingness to be vaccinated could suffer if getting vaccinated is viewed as a political statement or if there is lack of trust in the efficacy and safety of a vaccine.

The details of a vaccine program will be debated and developed over the coming months. Businesses and employers need to stay abreast of these developments. If you have any questions about how a COVID-19 vaccine may impact you, please [contact me](#) or any member of the [Barley Snyder COVID-19 Response Service Team](#).

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