

## OSHA Provides Updated COVID-19 Guidance

PUBLISHED ON

**February 2, 2021**

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The U.S. Department of Labor Occupational Safety and Health Administration has issued [extensive new guidance](#) on mitigating and preventing the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace. The guidance is advisory in nature but lays the groundwork for what likely will be binding emergency, temporary standards issued in the near future.

The guidance includes several recommendations regarding vaccine availability and safety. The guidance encourages employers to provide employees with information about the "benefits and safety of vaccinations" and assist those who are eligible to obtain the vaccine at no cost.

However, even after vaccination, employees should continue to wear face coverings and physically distance, and the employer should continue to follow all existing contact-tracing and quarantine protocols, as recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and as required by existing Pennsylvania Department of Health orders.

The guidance further recommends that employers implement comprehensive COVID-19 prevention programs, involving employees in the program's development. Such programs should include conducting a hazard assessment, identifying a combination of measures that limit the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace, adopting measures to ensure that infected or exposed workers are appropriately quarantined or isolated and implementing protections from retaliation. OSHA suggests setting up an anonymous process for employees to voice concerns about COVID-19-related hazards and ensuring that workers understand they can raise such concerns without fear of retaliation.

Employers who do not yet have a written, comprehensive COVID-19 prevention plan or series of protocols should strongly consider creating one at this time, as such a plan is likely to be part of OSHA's forthcoming emergency, temporary standards. Employers also must continue to comply with Pennsylvania Department of Health orders, even as federal agencies become more active with enforcement.

The Barley Snyder Employment Practice Group can assist you in creating or evaluating COVID-19 protocols or consulting on specific cases. If you have any questions or concerns, please [reach out to anyone in the group](#).

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