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## **Back to Work and Vaccinations**

As businesses implement return to the office plans, considering how to address vaccination status is critical. This is currently a rapidly evolving landscape given the direction by some employers to mandate vaccinations. For example, the federal government has now mandated that all federal government employees must be vaccinated as a condition of their employment. Similar things are in motion for federally regulated industries, which includes airlines, railways and banks. Furthermore, several provinces have now mandated vaccinations in certain public facing roles.

If your business chooses to implement a mandatory vaccine policy, we recommend you consult with legal experts to ensure you are aware of the rights of your business and your employees. This includes how you collect data from your employees, even on a voluntary basis such as asking whether they have received one or two doses, if they intend to be vaccinated in the future or if they prefer not to disclose.

Furthermore, consider what accommodations you may want to provide in the event that an employee cannot be vaccinated, such as rapid testing at a regular frequency. Finally, consider undertaking a consultation process with your employees to allow them input into the process.

When choosing to implement a mandatory vaccine policy, consider the following:

1. **Prioritize health and safety:** ensuring the health and safety of your employees, customers and any other third parties who have in-person dealings with your business must be your top priority. This includes ensuring employees know they are returning to a safe workplace where the employer is taking measures to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 infections being spread as well as educating employees on the science behind the safety and efficacy of vaccines.
2. **Uphold privacy:** ensure an employee's personal health data remains secure with all necessary safeguards in place to protect it.
3. **Consider alternatives:** if an employee cannot receive a vaccine, consider what accommodations can be made for the employee, including regular rapid testing.
4. **Clear and open communication:** ensure you communicate the new policy to all employees and include relevant information such as how the new policy will work, when it will be implemented, how employee privacy will be safeguarded and what accommodations will be available for employees unable to be vaccinated.

5. **Ensure consistency:** if possible, use already existing technology, such as a provincial proof of vaccine, to help facilitate the authentication of your employees' vaccine status.

Although the majority of Canadians are now vaccinated, it is critical for business operators to continue to play their part in encouraging their employees to get vaccinated. This includes when provincial governments begin to offer booster shots. It is also important to remember there is no single measure that will end this pandemic or keep your employees safe. A suite of measures, including ongoing masking, distancing, cleaning and proper air filtration, will help increase safety in a return to the workplace scenario.

**For further support, please see our guide on [Talking to Employees about Vaccines](#).**

