

Top Strategies to Improve Staff Vaccination Rates



In early February, the Centers for Disease Prevention and Control (CDC) released **data** showing uptake among nursing home staff was only 37.5 percent. AHCA/NCAL has set a **goal** of increasing staff vaccination rates to 75%. To support providers in their efforts, AHCA/NCAL conducted a survey of facilities with low (less than 35%), medium (35-75%) and high (over 75%) vaccination rates to understand what strategies are most successful. The strategies identified below are commonly employed by providers achieving a 75% staff uptake rate.

1. Employ multiple strategies

Providers with high uptake are more likely to employ multiple strategies to promote vaccine uptake. Vaccine hesitancy is complicated, and concerns can range from the speed at which the vaccine was developed, concerns over safety or side effects and distrust in government, public health or other institutions.

Employ multiple approaches and be persistent in your efforts to address vaccine hesitancy. Remember that no one size fits all.

2. Set a goal

Providers who set goals are more likely to be successful in achieving higher uptake rates.

Commit to the AHCA/NCAL goal of increasing vaccine uptake among staff to 75% by June 30.

3. Listen to staff concerns over the vaccine

Providers with higher uptake rates are aware of staff concerns with the vaccine, and any staff actively discouraging vaccine uptake.

Listen to, hear and understand staff concerns over the vaccine in order to develop and employ effective strategies to encourage uptake. This may include conducting a survey, employing a process to receive anonymous feedback or simply talking to frontline staff directly to understand their hesitancy. Recognize that in some cases, hesitancy may be linked to historical trauma or institutional discrimination experienced by staff of minority backgrounds. It is important to understand and recognize these experiences in your efforts to gain trust.

4. Celebrate and support staff who receive the vaccine

Providers with higher uptake rates are more likely to use strategies that celebrate staff for being vaccinated, and support staff who choose to be vaccinated. Examples include:

- + Provide gifts or merchandise to staff who receive a vaccine (e.g. t-shirts and other merchandise). Examples: buttons, window placards, lawn signs, display banners, posters, and stickers. Utilize the AHCA/NCAL **#GetVaccinated** and **#GotVaccinated** graphics to develop collateral.
- + Publicly recognize staff who receive vaccination, such as inspirational videos showing the reasons staff are getting vaccinated or footage from previous vaccination clinics.
- + Provide paid time off to staff concerned with experiencing systemic reactions after the vaccine.

5. Develop Peer Level Ambassadors

Engaging a front-line staff person, or another influential staff person, in the organization to encourage others to be vaccinated has been shown to be successful in facilities with higher uptake rates. While hearing from health care professionals is important, peer-to-peer influence is also a powerful tool.

Ask peers and peer leaders on your staff to be first in line for the vaccine and to promote and support widespread vaccination.

6. Communication strategies that are frequent, targeted and personal

Repeated, frequent communication on the vaccine is shown to have higher impact than limited or isolated communication. In addition, individuals want to hear vaccine safety and benefits from a trusted medical professional, such as your medical director. Examples of communication opportunities may include:

- + One-on-one conversations between leadership and staff
- + Electronic communication (e.g. emails, intranet, e-newsletters)
- + Town halls with hosted by your medical director or another licensed healthcare professional. When hosting your town hall, utilize **AHCA/NCAL's best practices for hosting town halls**.

Resources and template materials can be found on **AHCA/NCAL's #GetVaccinated webpage**.

In addition to frequency of communication, the quality of your message matters. Leaders should:

- + Understand **why** staff are hesitant to receive the vaccine and target your communication and strategies toward their concerns.
- + Consider the **language** you are using when talking to staff, modify your message based on feedback or reactions among staff.
- + Hear their concerns, respond without judgement or reproach.
- + Use trusted sources in doing your research and responding to concerns, such as **resources from the Centers for Disease Prevention and Control (CDC)**.
- + For more information, utilize **AHCA/NCAL's Talking Points for LTC facilities**.

7. Emphasizing the positive benefits from taking the vaccine

While all providers tend to focus on messages of keeping yourself, your family and your coworkers safe, those with higher uptake also share messages of resuming activities such as visitation, getting back to normal and going to public spaces at a much higher rate. The positive aspect of these latter messages may be more compelling for some individuals.



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