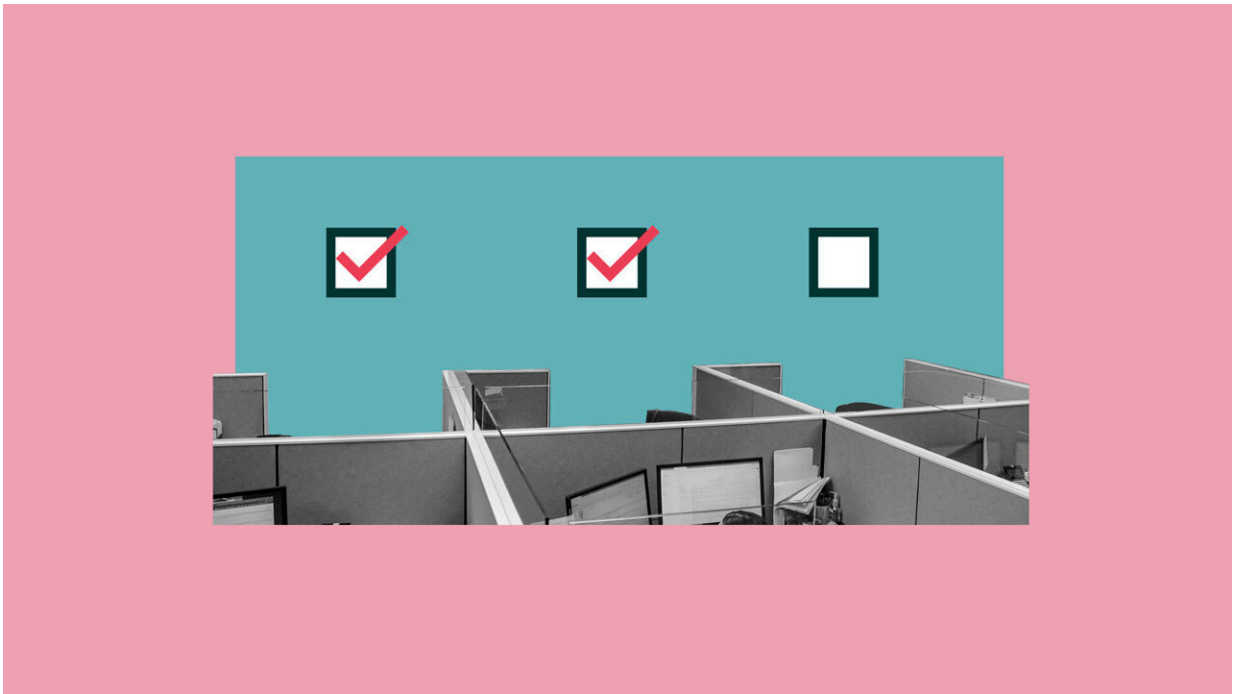


Can employers make COVID-19 vaccination mandatory?

May 27 2021, by Mae Anderson



Can employers make COVID-19 vaccination mandatory? Credit: AP Illustration/Peter Hamlin

Can employers make COVID-19 vaccination mandatory?

Yes, with some exceptions.

Experts say U.S. employers can require employees to take [safety](#)

[measures](#), including vaccination. That doesn't necessarily mean you would get fired if you refuse, but you might need to sign a waiver or agree to work under specific conditions to limit any risk you might pose to yourself or others.

"Employers generally have wide scope" to make rules for the workplace, said Dorit Reiss, a [law professor](#) who specializes in [vaccine](#) policies at the University of California Hastings College of the Law. "It's their business."

Rules will vary by country. But the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission has allowed companies to mandate the flu and other vaccines, and has indicated they can require COVID-19 vaccines.

There are exceptions. For example, people can request exemptions for medical or religious reasons. Some states have proposed laws that restrict mandating the vaccines because of their "emergency use" status, but that may become less of an issue since Pfizer has applied for full approval and others are likely to follow.

How employers approach the issue will vary. Many might not want to require vaccination because of the administrative burden of tracking compliance and managing exemption requests, noted Michelle S. Strowhiro, an employment adviser and lawyer at McDermott Will & Emery. Legal claims could also arise.

As a result, many employers will likely strongly encourage vaccination without making it mandatory, Strowhiro said.

Walmart, for example, is offering a \$75 bonus for employees who provide proof they were vaccinated.

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