

White House considering stronger measures to boost COVID vaccinations

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(HealthDay)—Tougher steps to compel long-term care facilities,

universities and other institutions to mandate COVID-19 vaccinations are being considered by the Biden administration.

It's looking at using federal regulatory powers and the threat of withholding federal funds from institutions to increase vaccination rates, according to people familiar with the early-stage discussions, the *Washington Post* reported.

The objective of the new measures would be to increase vaccinations among the approximately 90 million Americans who are eligible but have refused or haven't been able to get them.

One option being considered is restricting Medicare dollars or other federal funds from nursing homes and other [long-term-care facilities](#) that don't require staff to be vaccinated, one of the sources told the *Post*.

As the Delta variant of the coronavirus spreads more quickly than predicted by some models, the White House is looking for ways to control it.

Experts applauded the idea.

"I think wisely using the federal spending power is absolutely right," Lawrence Gostin, who directs Georgetown University's O'Neill Institute for National and Global Health Law, told the *Post*. He noted that he has discussed the idea of using federal funds as an incentive with Biden administration officials.

Gostin said he has suggested "starting with high-risk settings with an absolute ethical obligation and [legal obligation](#) to keep your workers and your clients safe."

Other experts have publicly floated the idea of using more federal

incentives to push for vaccinations.

"If you look through history, there are presidents who—even in the absence of legal authority—influence people, you might say," said Ezekiel Emanuel, a bioethicist at the University of Pennsylvania who recently organized a joint statement from nearly 60 medical groups urging every health facility to require workers to get vaccinated, told the *Post*. "We keep referring to this COVID thing like it's an emergency, and then we don't behave like it's a wartime emergency."

About a third of Americans are unvaccinated, and only a quarter of them said they plan to get vaccinated by the end of the year, according to a Kaiser Family Foundation conducted in July, the *Post* reported.

It also showed that about 3% of unvaccinated Americans would get vaccinated only if it was required for work, school or other activities.

More information: Visit the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for more on [COVID vaccines](#).

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