

Healthcare workers in Massachusetts prefer vaccine strategies supporting education and community-based communication

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Healthcare workers are a trusted health information source and are uniquely positioned to reduce the burden of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Although COVID-19 vaccines have been shown to significantly reduce the risk of severe COVID-19-related illness and death, vaccine and booster rates have remained sub-par in the U.S.

As the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic continues, COVID-19 boosters will likely be needed at [regular intervals](#) to decrease the risk of severe disease, hospitalization, and/or death. Therefore, the need to better understand potential strategies to improve the utilization of COVID-19 vaccine and booster uptake is vital.

A new mixed methods study that surveyed healthcare workers working in MA has found they favored strategies that educated the public, partnered with communities and used [personal experiences](#) to educate the public. The study found limited support for broad implementation of COVID-19 vaccine mandates as a way to improve vaccination rates. Additionally, incentive programs were also believed to have limited impacts.

"As the SARS-CoV-2 crisis continues, additional doses of vaccines will likely be recommended for the foreseeable future. Our research has important implications in understanding healthcare workers' perceptions towards COVID-19 vaccination and future potential public health crises. Overall, strategies favoring education and trusted, community-based communication were viewed most favorably by healthcare workers," explained corresponding author Rebecca Perkins, MD, Professor of Obstetrics & Gynecology at Boston University Chobanian & Avedisian School of Medicine.

Researchers from the Chobanian & Avedisian SOM interviewed and surveyed over 250 healthcare workers between April 2021 and March 2022.

Participants were asked about their attitudes towards COVID-19 vaccine

and booster mandates, incentives and other strategies to improve vaccination rates. Overall, attitudes toward vaccine and booster mandates were nuanced; many supported mandates to protect their patients' health, others emphasized personal autonomy, while some were against mandates if job termination was the consequence of declining vaccines. Similarly, views regarding vaccine incentives differed; some considered incentives helpful, yet many viewed them as coercive.

According to the researchers, participants expressed more support for strategies other than mandates or incentives to support vaccine uptake. Many believed [outreach efforts](#) by trusted [community members](#) such as religious leaders could improve [vaccination rates](#).

In addition to tailored [community outreach](#) via trusted messengers, strategies believed to be most effective to encourage vaccination included improving accessibility to vaccination sites, addressing misinformation, discussing vaccine safety and one-on-one conversations between patients and [healthcare workers](#).

"Improving accessibility of vaccination sites was considered an important approach to support vaccination efforts. Walk-in, convenient, community vaccination sites were supported over requiring online appointments and using mass vaccination sites without easy access to public transportation," added Perkins who is an obstetrician & gynecologist at Boston Medical Center.

These findings appear in the journal of *Human Vaccines and Immunotherapeutics*.

More information: Sharon M. Casey et al, Healthcare workers' attitudes on mandates, incentives, and strategies to improve COVID-19 vaccine uptake: A mixed methods study, *Human Vaccines & Immunotherapeutics* (2022). [DOI: 10.1080/21645515.2022.2144048](https://doi.org/10.1080/21645515.2022.2144048)

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