

Low Vaccination Rate Among Senior Housing Staff Poses Problems. Are There Any Solutions?

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Florida Trend (citing the *Tampa Bay Times*) recently reported that while 93% of assisted living residents have received at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, vaccination rates of staff are lagging across the state. According to the report, only 40% of assisted living staffers have been vaccinated.

The hesitancy of staff to get vaccinated has prompted facilities to find creative ways to encourage vaccination—from providing educational materials to get staff comfortable with the safety of the vaccine to offering bonuses and door prizes for vaccination.

On the bright side, the high level of vaccination among senior living residents has lowered the number of coronavirus cases among residents dramatically. The risk to residents' health from catching the virus is therefore much less.

However, staff refusal to get vaccinated raises the risk of an outbreak among workers at a facility creating potential staffing crises. The risk now shifts from residents being exposed to the virus by staff to the safety of residents potentially being impacted by understaffing.

Wise operators will continue to use all (legal) means at their disposal to get staff vaccinated while also continuing to take what steps they can to prevent an infected worker from exposing others to the virus (temperature checks before entry, etc.). But, until herd immunity is reached, senior living facilities remain vulnerable to outbreaks and the various risks that flow from them.

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