

## HOME HEALTH CARE

# Only 26% of Home Health Workers Have Been Vaccinated

By Joyce Famakinwa | March 21, 2021

---

As COVID-19 vaccination efforts continue across the country, just over half of front-line health care workers have received at least the first dose. Of these workers, home health professionals are the least vaccinated.

That's according to a recent survey from the Kaiser Family Foundation (KFF) and The Washington Post.

Conducted in early March, the survey examines health care workers — including home health professionals — and their intentions in regard to getting vaccinated. The data is based on interviews with 1,327 front-line health care workers in a variety of settings.

Last December, the CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) almost unanimously voted to recommend that health care workers, among others, be placed on the top of the COVID-19 vaccine priority list.

Broadly, the committee determined that health care workers were at high risk of contracting the virus due to their line of work. Furthermore, it is beneficial to ensure that the people responsible for providing care are safe and healthy.

"Protection of health care personnel leads to preservation of health care capacity — and better health outcomes for all," Dr. Kathleen Dooling, a medical officer at the CDC, said during ACIP's December meeting. "Vaccinating health care workers promotes justice because health care personnel put themselves at risk and will be essential to carry out the vaccination program."

Since then, 52% of health care workers have begun the vaccination process and received their first shot. About 42% of workers have received both shots.

When looking at home health workers, only 26% said they have received a COVID-19 vaccine, according to the KFF-Washington Post survey. That's compared to 66% of workers in hospitals, 64% of workers in outpatient clinics, and 50% of workers in nursing homes or assisted care facilities.

One of the factors driving low vaccination rates among home health workers is employer efforts. The majority of vaccinated workers completed this process through their employers.

Among those who are unvaccinated, only 34% of home health workers have either been offered or received the vaccine from their employer.

On the flip side, 80% of workers at hospitals, 72% of workers at nursing homes or assisted care facilities, and 64% of workers at outpatient clinics have received this offer from their employers.

One takeaway from these results is the importance of home health providers working to make vaccines accessible.

Over the past months, home health providers have taken different approaches when it comes to helping their workers get vaccinated.

New York-based home health and hospice provider the Visiting Nurse Service of New York (VNSNY) decided to administer the vaccine internally. The company opened up its own "vaccine clinic" in January.

"Because of our size and our capabilities, we thought it was very important that we provide a vaccine program for our employees that are interested," Andria Castellanos, VNSNY's executive vice president and chief of provider services, [previously told Home Health Care News](#). "We began planning for that about three weeks prior to home care workers being eligible."

VNSNY helps provide care for about 44,300 patients and health plan members. The organization is one of the largest nonprofit home- and community-based services providers in the U.S.

Meanwhile, companies like Intrepid USA Healthcare Services have focused on tracking which employees have begun the vaccination process, according to Dr. Bob Parker, the company's chief clinical and compliance officer.

"Fortunately, we implemented technology — a patient engagement platform that we were getting ready to roll out just as COVID hit us," Parker said [during a recent HHCN webinar](#). "We were quickly able to translate that to screen our staff. We are now working to build out a survey [to track] who's gotten their COVID vaccine, have they gotten their first one, have they gotten their second one."

Dallas-based Intrepid USA has 75 local care centers across 17 states.