



Vol. 2 | June 2021

Message from Julia Tritz

After more than a year into the COVID 19 pandemic, there are positive signs that we are making progress and cause for hope on the horizon. Approximately 174.7 million Americans have received one or both doses of the vaccine to date. While this information is promising, the volatility of this pandemic reminds us how important it is for us to play our part to ensure our own safety and the safety of others. If you are able but haven't already done so, we encourage you to get [vaccinated](#), and to follow the masking, physical distancing, and other public health guidance established by the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).



As the Federal Government and the Department chart the path forward, we are grateful to those that have already engaged with us through the "Future of Work" listening sessions and look forward to hearing your feedback through other employee engagement mechanisms we are planning this summer. We do not have a planned date for increasing our on site work presence at this time. We are carefully considering the available guidance with worker safety and health as the paramount concern. We look forward to sharing more information about engagement opportunities in the coming weeks. As always, please visit the COVID 19 [LaborNet](#) page and share any questions you may have with our team at: [REDACTED]

- Julia Tritz, Director, Business Operations Center

In Case You Missed It

Here is a quick recap of the latest COVID-19 information and guidance sent to all DOL employees:



- [Updated Physical Distancing Guidance](#)
- [Vaccination Information and Resources](#)
- [Federal Flexible Spending Account Program \(FSAFEDS\): Special Enrollment Period \(June 1 – June 30\)](#)
- [American Rescue Plan Act – Emergency Paid Leave](#)
- [Reminder: Official Approval is Required to Take DOL-Issued Devices Outside the US](#)
- [Updated Frances Perkins Building Mask Guidelines](#)
- [Updated Masking Guidance](#)
- [Be Mindful of Ransomware Attacks](#)
- [COVID-19 Vaccination Card Best Practices](#)

Additional information, including [Employee Messages](#), are posted on the [DOL COVID-19 LaborNet page](#). If you have questions, please visit the [FAQ page](#), or contact us at: [REDACTED]

COVID-19 Healthcare Emergency Temporary Standard

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has issued an emergency temporary standard (ETS) to protect healthcare workers from contracting coronavirus. The standard focuses on healthcare workers most



likely to have contact with someone infected with the virus. OSHA announced the new standard alongside new general-industry guidance, both of which are aligned with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidance. OSHA's guidance will help employers and workers in other industries protect unvaccinated workers, especially in industries with prolonged close-contacts, like meat processing, manufacturing, seafood, and grocery and high-volume retail. Check out the [COVID-19 Healthcare Emergency Temporary Standard](#) and watch this newsletter for future updates on OSHA's ETS-related activity.

Employee Spotlight

Rachel Culley, a Trial Attorney with the Boston Regional Office of the Solicitor, was recently recognized by the [City of Cambridge](#), Massachusetts for making a difference in her community. Since January, Rachel has volunteered her time with Vaccine Hunters/Angels Massachusetts to help individuals navigate the vaccine scheduling process. Though she primarily helped elderly, disabled, or isolated individuals secure appointments at local pharmacies and clinics, Rachel also worked with anyone who needed more information or support in the booking process.



Often working into the early morning to book appointments, Rachel has helped more than 500 local residents get vaccinated. Inspired by her friends in healthcare, Rachel used the skills that she has to help her neighbor and support her community. Prior to serving at DOL, Rachel worked at the Massachusetts Appeal Court, the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of New York, and the Massachusetts Attorney General's Office.

**Do you know of a DOL colleague making a difference during COVID-19?
Share the story with us: [DOLCOVID-19Newsletter!](#)**

Did You Know?

That the DOL Worklife4You program offers a variety of free webinars on topics of interest to our community? Here's a list of upcoming webinars, if interested:

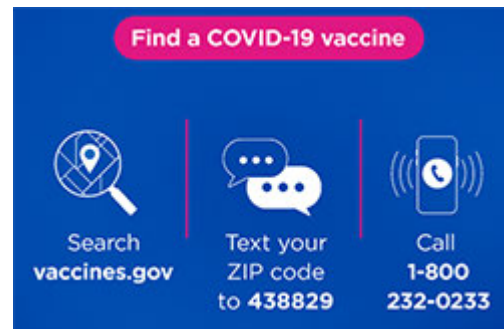


- **Thursday, June 17, 2021 (1-2pm ET) – Succeed at Work: Best Practices for Working Remotely:** This webinar outlines strategies for communication, productivity, and time management all within the context of working from your home environment. Participants will explore how to work around children, how to manage distractions, and how to cope with the unique emotional pressures of working away from the office. [Please register for this webinar in advance.](#)
- **Wednesday, June 23, 2021 (1 2pm ET) For Supervisors: Focused and Flexible – Managing Amid Uncertainty:** This webinar examines how change impacts the individual and the organization and outlines your role in strengthening team commitment and maintaining productivity. We'll also review the importance of practicing self care to help you stay focused and flexible during periods of instability. [Please register for this webinar in advance.](#)

For more information, and to see other free Worklife4You webinars available to DOL employees, visit the [2021 Worklife Webinar Calendar](#), or the [Office of Human Resources \(OHR\) Employee Assistance Program LaborNet page](#).

Vaccines: What You Need to Know

The Biden Administration has launched a national public education campaign, [We Can Do This](#), to help Americans make informed decisions about COVID-19 vaccines to protect themselves and their communities. **The We Can Do This** website contains ample [resources](#) to help you learn more about vaccination efforts.



We encourage you to keep the following in mind when developing your plans for vaccination:

- Getting vaccinated gets us back to normal. Getting vaccinated is the best way to defeat this virus and get back to safely gathering with family and friends.
- The vaccine is free and available to everyone. Vaccines are available at no cost to everyone age 12 and older living in the United States, regardless of immigration or insurance status.
- Getting vaccinated is a personal decision. Talk to your doctor, pharmacist, or health care provider. Estimates show that 90% of doctors have gotten a shot themselves.
- The majority of American adults have been vaccinated. They are now protected from this deadly virus and are on the path back to normal.

Interested in joining the **We Can Do This** campaign? Learn more about joining the [COVID-19 Community Corps](#). Additional information can also be found on the LaborNet COVID-19 webpage: [COVID-19 Vaccine Information](#).

Future of Work Listening Sessions

Last Wednesday, June 9th, OASAM facilitated over 20 listening sessions with employees at all levels and years of departmental service to gather feedback and ideas on the "Future of Work" at DOL. These discussions were prompted by the Administration's "Future of Work" initiative that recognizes: the vital work federal employees were able to accomplish in a maximum telework posture; the impact the pandemic had on assumptions about the way we work and what can be accomplished via telework; and, the opportunity to use lessons learned to change how we operate going forward. The Department is developing its "Future of Work" draft approach, which will include high-level strategies around workplace flexibilities, space management, information tools and capabilities and more. This draft approach will be informed by the DOL-wide telework survey that was implemented in December 2020, union leadership meetings, recommendations from space planning workgroups, and the listening sessions conducted throughout this month. Over 850 DOL employees registered to attend a listening session last week!



For those who registered, but were not randomly selected to attend a session last week, please stay tuned for information about additional listening sessions that will be added this month. If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to contact us at: Contact.OASAM@dol.gov.

Flexible Spending Account Special Enrollment Period

Did you know that there is a **2021 Special Enrollment Period (SEP) available** from June 1 through June 30, 2021 to allow eligible employees a **one-time opportunity to enroll or increase/decrease federal spending account (FSA) elections** for the 2021 plan year **without** a qualifying life event (QLE)?



In response to recent legislation under the Consolidated Appropriations Act and the American Rescue Plan Act with Internal Revenue Service guidance, the Federal Flexible Spending Account Program (known as FSAFEDS) allows federal employees to enroll, increase, or decrease their current elections during the 2021 SEP between June 1 and June 30, 2021, in the Health Care FSA or Limited Expense FSA and/or Dependent Care FSA. This SEP allows those who did not enroll or re-enroll during "Open Season" the opportunity to enroll for 2021 and to gain access to available 2020 carryover funds.

Visit [LaborNet](#) for more information about this important opportunity!

American Rescue Plan Act - Emergency Paid Leave

Emergency Paid Leave (EPL) was enacted in the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act signed into law on March 11, 2021. EPL provides a source of paid leave for federal employees who are unable to work (including telework) due to specific qualifying reasons related to COVID-19, especially for those in limited leave circumstances. EPL is effective through September 30, 2021, and may be claimed retroactively to March 11, 2021, beginning in pay period 11.



The Office of Human Resources will be hosting Emergency Paid Leave Information Sessions to ensure interested DOL employees have an understanding of how this type of leave works. Managers and supervisors are also encouraged to attend one of the sessions scheduled for managers and supervisors.

Please note: The ARP created a fund of \$570 million to be shared by federal agencies to cover EPL. Because there is a limit on the amount of money in the federal fund, and because DOL will draw on this fund along with other federal agencies, there is the possibility that the fund will be exhausted before September 30, 2021. If that were to occur, additional emergency paid leave would not be available to DOL employees and previously approved emergency paid leave (for which DOL has not yet received reimbursement) would have to be canceled. DOL employees who used emergency paid leave in connection with the denied reimbursement request would have to enter corrected timesheets to change previously used emergency paid leave to another type of paid or unpaid leave (i.e., annual leave, sick leave, compensatory time, credit hours, time-off award hours, or leave without pay (LWOP)). Visit the LaborNet FAQs on Emergency Paid Leave for more information.

For more details about EPL, including instructions for requesting the use of EPL and other important considerations, please visit LaborNet. If you have questions regarding EPL, please send an email to [REDACTED]

Asked & Answered

You asked, and we answered!

Q: Am I required to wear a mask in DOL offices?



A: In accordance with the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [Interim Public Health Recommendations for Fully Vaccinated People](#) and guidance from OMB, fully vaccinated Federal employees, fully vaccinated onsite contractors, and fully vaccinated visitors to DOL workspaces are no longer required to wear masks or physically distance. Specifically, this means that if you are fully vaccinated (at least two weeks past your final dose), you are no longer required to wear a mask or physically distance in DOL workspaces.

If you are not fully vaccinated (at least two weeks past your final dose), you must wear a mask and continue physically distancing in DOL workspaces consistent with the requirements set forth in DOL's [COVID-19 Workplace Safety Plan](#). The mask (also called a face covering) must cover the nose and mouth, in accordance with current CDC and OSHA guidance.

CDC recommends the following: Medical procedure masks, masks with inner filter pockets or made of two or more layers of breathable fabric (such as cotton) that is tightly woven (i.e., fabrics that do not let light pass through when held up to a light source). Masks must fit properly (snugly around the nose and chin with no large gaps around the sides of the face). DOL does not permit novelty/non-protective masks, including neck gaiters, scarves, and bandanas, masks with ventilation valves, or face shields as a substitute for masks.

Appropriate masks must be worn consistently and correctly. Not fully vaccinated people must wear masks and continue physically distancing in any common areas or shared workspaces (including open floorplan office space, cubicle embankments, and conference rooms). DOL agencies, in coordination with the DOL COVID-19 Coordination Team, must plan for how to grant exceptions consistent with CDC guidelines, such as when a not fully vaccinated individual is alone in a room or office with floor to ceiling walls and a closed door, completely alone in a workspace, or for a limited time when eating or drinking and maintaining at least 6 feet of distance in accordance with CDC guidelines.

Q: If everyone in our office is vaccinated, do we still have to follow the Department's COVID-19 guidelines (e.g., the most recent CDC guidelines that vaccinated individuals no longer need to wear a mask or physically distance)?

A: DOL is developing a plan for the phased reentry of DOL workspaces that is aligned with the guidance from the [Safer Federal Workforce Task Force](#) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The DOL COVID-19 Workplace Safety Plan, including the maximum telework posture and workplace occupancy limits, remains in place. We will continue to update our Plan based on federal government and public health guidance. Information about the Department's maximum telework posture can be found in the [DOL COVID-19 Workplace Safety Plan](#). DOL employees who are fully vaccinated (at least two weeks past your final dose) are no longer required to wear a mask or physically distance within DOL workspaces.

For more FAQs, visit the [DOL COVID-19 FAQ LaborNet page](#)!

Interested in Learning More?

We have a number of helpful resources available for you on the [DOL COVID-19 LaborNet page](#)! Information is updated daily — visit some of the most popular links below:

- [COVID-19 Guidance and Resources Main Page](#)
- [Workplace Flexibilities](#)
- [Telework](#)
- [Benefits & Wellness](#)

Questions? Please email us at 