

## Hot Topics In Risk Management



Our Risk Management Team is here to help you minimize and mitigate Medical Professional Liability risk.



## Vaccination Competency and Needlestick Prevention

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and Department of Defense initiated Operation Warp Speed to produce and distribute 300 million COVID-19 vaccines by January 2021. Creation and production of the vaccines required Warp Speed. Unfortunately, distribution planning was given less focused attention and the initial roll-out has been slower than expected. This gives physicians and practice administrators time to confirm the credentials and competency of practice staff to store, administer, and properly document vaccinations of any kind. Check the practice's employment and/or credentials/competency files to ensure registered nurses, licensed practical or vocational nurses, and medical assistants are qualified to administer vaccines. The documentation will fortify the defense of a medical professional liability claim related to vaccine storage and administration.

With sound documentation of credentials and competency in place, physicians and practices should ensure "sharps" disposal containers are in every room and office in the practice. Physicians and practice administrators should also remind staff to use sharps containers and never throw away loose needles or sharps in trash cans, recycling bins, sinks, or toilets. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) says the safest way to dispose of needles or sharps is in an approved container.<sup>[1]</sup> If a container is not available and needle recapping is necessary, practices should encourage the use of mechanical recapping devices, practice-approved needle clippers, or the FDA's one-handed scoop needle recapping method.<sup>[2]</sup>

### The U.S. Food and Drug Administration One-Handed Needle Recapping Method

1. Place the cap on a flat surface, like the table or counter, with something firm to "push" the needle cap against.
2. Holding the syringe with the needle attached in one hand, slip the needle into the cap without using the other hand.
3. Push the capped needle against a firm object to "seat" the cap onto the needle firmly using only one hand.

Senior Risk Management Consultants and Supervisors are available to answer professional liability questions about medication and vaccination administration, documentation of credentials and competency, and needlestick injuries. Please call or email the MICA Risk Management Services Hotline Monday through Friday 8:30 am to 5:00 pm MST at 602.808.2137 or [rm\\_info@mica-insurance.com](mailto:rm_info@mica-insurance.com).

[1] See U.S. Food and Drug Administration. *What to Do If You Can't Find a Sharps Disposal Container*. Issued January 24, 2018. <https://www.fda.gov/medical-devices/safely-using-sharps-needles-and-syringes-home-work-and-travel/what-do-if-you-cant-find-sharps-disposal-container> |

[2] *Id.*

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