

Policy & Procedure Manual

COVID-19 VACCINATION

PURPOSE:

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused significant morbidity and mortality. COVID-19 is spread primarily through respiratory droplets. People supported with certain pre-existing medical conditions are at a higher risk for more severe symptoms after contracting COVID-19.¹

The vaccines currently approved in Canada have been shown to be safe and effective against symptomatic COVID-19.² A copy of the Ministry of Health's Information Sheet regarding these vaccines is attached as Appendix 1 to this Policy. As more vaccines become approved, OPTIONS NORTHWEST will provide additional information to the agency on these.

OPTIONS NORTHWEST is dedicated to ensuring the health and safety of all people supported as well as employees, volunteers and students who perform services on behalf of OPTIONS NORTHWEST. To assist OPTIONS NORTHWEST in providing a safe work environment for not only its employees, volunteers and students, but also the vulnerable population we serve, OPTIONS NORTHWEST has created this Policy.

OPTIONS NORTHWEST aims to:

1. Give protection to employees, volunteers and students in the short-term against symptomatic, confirmed COVID-19 disease in the event that they contract COVID-19.³
2. Inform employees, volunteers and students of their immunization options and the potential consequences for non-immunization.

POLICY:

When COVID-19 vaccines become available to employees, volunteers or students, OPTIONS NORTHWEST strongly encourages employees, volunteers and students to receive the COVID-19 vaccination.

¹ Policy 1 Public Health Agency of Canada, "COVID-19 signs, symptoms and severity of disease: A clinician guide" (18 September 2020): <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novelcoronavirus-infection/guidance-documents/signs-symptoms-severity.html>.

² National Advisory Committee on Immunization, "Recommendations on the use of COVID-19 vaccines" (12 January 2021): <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/immunization/national-advisorycommittee-on-immunization-naci/recommendations-use-covid-19-vaccines.html>. ("NACI Recommendations")

³ NACI Recommendations, *supra*, footnote 2

If employees are on shift when notified of an appointment for the vaccine, they will be accommodated and will be provided paid time to obtain the vaccine if the COVID-19 vaccines are not made available to them on site. Those not on shift/working at the time, will attend on their own time.

All employees, volunteers and students once vaccinated will provide a record of completed vaccination to the Health and Safety Coordinator.

ACCOMMODATION:

Should employees, volunteers or students decline the COVID-19 vaccination, once available to them, for reasons related to disability, creed or any other grounds protected by the Human Rights Code, OPTIONS NORTHWEST requests that such personnel identify to OPTIONS NORTHWEST that declining the COVID-19 vaccine was based on a ground protected by the Human Rights Code. OPTIONS NORTHWEST reserves the right to ask for information to substantiate the grounds, further to OPTIONS NORTHWEST normal workplace accommodation process.

OPTIONS NORTHWEST is committed to human rights accommodation up to the point of undue hardship where a person is unable to vaccinate for human rights protected reasons. Such situations will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

ALTERNATIVES TO VACCINATION (NON-CODE GROUNDS):

Employees

If Employees do not receive the COVID-19 vaccination, once it is available to them, for reasons unrelated to a protected ground under the Human Rights Code, the response will be determined with reference to each circumstance. Considerations will include but are not limited to recommendations by Public Health, service agreements or contractual obligations with partnering entities, the type of work performed (whether it is direct support, work in a congregate care setting, individualized support, administration/office work), whether there is an outbreak in the workplace, and the present community risk level (the zone that applies in the region and whether the area has a high rate of infection).

For those employees who do not receive the COVID-19 vaccination for reasons unrelated to a protected ground under the Human Rights Code, alternatives to vaccination may include one or a combination of the following:

1. Reassignment: employees may not be permitted to work with people supported (either those at high risk of susceptibility to COVID-19 or all people supported).
2. Temporary remote work where applicable.
3. Modifications to the work/service/support performed where applicable.

4. Temporary, unpaid leave of absence during this time. Unvaccinated employees may be permitted to use any unused vacation, personal days, floats and lieu time at employer's discretion.

Volunteers and Students

If volunteers and students do not receive the COVID-19 vaccine, once it is available to them, for reasons unrelated to a protected ground under the Human Rights Code, the volunteer or student will be assigned to tasks that restrict their interactions with people supported if such tasks are available. If such tasks are unavailable, unvaccinated Volunteers and Students will not be scheduled.

Other COVID-19 Protective Measures:

All OPTIONS NORTHWEST policies with respect to COVID-19 protective measures continue to apply to all vaccinated and unvaccinated employees, volunteers and students. Vaccinations do not replace PPE, handwashing, cough hygiene and social distancing. PPE and all COVID-19 precautions continue to be in effect unless otherwise directed.

Review of Policy:

This Policy will be regularly reviewed and updated to reflect the latest scientific research, guidance and legislation from the Ontario government, the federal government, Ministry of Health, the Public Health Agency of Canada, Public Health Ontario, Local Health Units and any other relevant health bodies.

RECOMMENDED BY: Director, Human Resources

APPENDICES: 1

OPERATIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY: Board of Directors, Administration, Finance, Human Resources, Community Services (all), Volunteers, Students

ORIGINAL POLICY DATE: February 2021

AUTHORIZED BY: Executive Director

SIGNATURE:  _____

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

What You Need to Know About COVID-19 Vaccine

This fact sheet provides information on the safety and effectiveness of mRNA COVID-19 vaccines. See PHO's [COVID-19 Vaccines](#) webpage for more resources on vaccines.

About mRNA COVID-19 vaccines

- The two currently approved COVID-19 vaccines in Ontario are messenger RNA (mRNA) vaccines, Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna.
- Messenger RNA (mRNA) vaccines are designed to produce an immune response that protects us against the virus that causes COVID-19.
- The vaccine does not give you the virus. It provides our cells with instructions on how to produce a copy of a protein that is found on the surface of the COVID-19 virus. Our bodies recognize this protein which is what starts our immune response.



COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective

- Both COVID-19 vaccines approved by Health Canada have been studied in clinical trials involving more than 70,000 individuals.
- The vaccines cannot give you COVID-19.
- The vaccines have been approved by Health Canada after they were shown to be safe, effective and of high quality.
- In clinical trials, the COVID-19 vaccines were more than 94% effective in preventing COVID-19 among people who had received two doses.
- As of early January 2021, more than 32 million people have been immunized with either of the two mRNA vaccines as part of [COVID-19 vaccine programs](#) around the world.
- The vaccines do not interfere with COVID-19 test results used to look for infection and do not give false positive test results.
- More research is being done to determine how long the vaccine protection lasts, and if it will prevent others around you from getting sick with COVID-19.



Like every vaccine, there may be possible side effects

- The most common side effects are pain at the injection site, fatigue and headaches.
- Other common side effects can include: fever, chills, muscle pain and joint pain.
- These side effects usually occur within 1-2 days after vaccination and go away within 1-3 days.

Continue to protect yourself and others

- Until vaccines are widely available, it is important to continue to protect yourself and your loved ones from COVID-19.
- Keep practicing protective measures such as washing your hands, physical distancing, covering your mouth when you cough, wearing a mask and following local public health guidance.

Learn about the virus

To learn more and access up-to-date information on COVID-19, visit the Ontario Ministry of Health's website: ontario.ca/coronavirus.

For more information please contact: _____

The information in this document is current as of January 20, 2021

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