



## Q&As for Stakeholders

The Manitoba government will require all provincial employees who work with vulnerable populations to be fully immunized for COVID-19 by Oct. 31, or undergo regular testing.

The employees will be required to be fully immunized with two doses of COVID-19 vaccine by October 31st, which means individuals must receive their first dose on or before first day of school, Sept. 7, 2021, and their second dose on or before Oct. 17, 2021.

### **Q: Why is the province making it mandatory for designated public sector employees to be vaccinated against COVID-19?**

A: Public health must ensure that as many people as possible, particularly those under 12 who may not yet be able to get vaccinated, are protected from the virus. The policy also protects other vulnerable groups including seniors, patients, and non-immunized people.

### **Q: Who will be subject to the public health order?**

A: The order specifies public sector employees who deal directly with the public, especially those who serve vulnerable people and children.

### **Education workers**

- All staff and practicum students working in K-12 schools and facilities including: teachers, educational support staff and other staff working in schools and directly with students, including bus drivers, custodians and child care staff working in school-based early learning and child care facilities.

### **Child care workers**

- Including staff and practicum students working in licensed early learning and child care facilities;

### **Health care workers**

- Including direct health-care providers and workers, including but not limited to physicians, nurses, allied health professionals, support service staff and others deemed appropriate for each site/area/program in public and private health-care settings.
- Direct care providers are defined as anyone who may come in contact with patients/residents/clients, patient/resident/client care environments, patient/resident/client care equipment and blood and body fluids;

## Public sector employees and funded agency employees

- Including public servants and funded-agency employees who work in high-risk settings with direct, ongoing contact with the public or clients, such as those who work in congregate/residential settings or group homes, work with vulnerable populations including children or have to enter the home of a client.

## Manitoba Justice employees

- Including those who work with vulnerable people and in correctional facilities.

### **Q: What is required for vaccination / proof of vaccination?**

A: Everyone subject to the order must become fully vaccinated against COVID-19 and provide their employer with proof they are fully vaccinated, in order to continue working. Fully-immunized individuals are those who have received both doses (any combination) of an approved two dose COVID-19 vaccine (AstraZeneca, Pfizer, Moderna), or a single dose of an approved single dose COVID-19 vaccine (Janssen/Johnson & Johnson) with more than 14 days having passed since the final vaccination was received.

### **Q: What will happen if I or my employee are not fully immunized, or if we do not provide proper proof of vaccination?**

A: If proper proof of vaccination is not provided, employees will only be permitted to continue working in their designated position if they get tested for COVID-19 at intervals specified in the order, which could be up to three times a week for full time employees. Further details on testing intervals will be provided.

### **Q: Is my employment conditional on being fully vaccinated?**

A: The policy does not require vaccination as a condition of employment. Rather, employees will have a choice between being fully vaccinated and showing proof of vaccination, or undergoing frequent COVID-19 testing, in order to work.

### **Q: How will the testing process work?**

A: More detailed work is underway on the public health order and on the guidance to support it. We'll be sharing more details in the weeks ahead.

### **Q: What are the acceptable forms of proof of vaccination?**

A: Acceptable forms of proof will include the Manitoba Immunization Card (digital or physical), or a secure printed provincial immunization record from either public health or the Shared Health online portal that shows immunization dates.

**Q: How does public health define “fully vaccinated?”**

A: Fully-immunized individuals are those who have received both doses (any combination) of an approved two dose COVID-19 vaccine (AstraZeneca, Pfizer, Moderna), or a single dose of an approved single dose COVID-19 vaccine (Janssen/Johnson & Johnson) with more than 14 days having passed since the final vaccination was received.

**Q: When does the order take effect?**

A: Effective dates and all other details will soon be announced. Workers are expected to be fully immunized no later than late October 2021.

**Q: If I have a medical reason for not getting vaccinated, what should I do?**

A: The public health order was developed with input from medical experts in various medical specialties including oncology, allergy, immunology, transplant medicine, neurology, obstetrics, etc., to ensure the policy is fair to all, including those with medical concerns about vaccination. Expert opinion was provided, based on existing and evolving evidence and clinical practice, about whether there are patient populations that cannot be immunized for medical reasons. It was determined that medical exemptions are not warranted for the COVID-19 vaccine. There are specific situations, however, where vaccination may be delayed, typically no longer than three months. Please connect with your health care provider for more information.

**Q: Can I or my employee(s) refuse to be vaccinated for personal or religious reasons?**

A: The policy offers a choice between immunization and testing. Public health must accommodate those who cannot receive a vaccine to the point of undue hardship, and employers must support employees to get vaccinated and help to work around any obstacles or access issues.

**Q: Is it a human rights violation to require vaccination as a condition of employment? What are the ethical implications here?**

A: In law, discrimination is defined as treating a person differently on the basis of some characteristic that goes to the root of who they are as a human being (where there is no reasonable cause to do so), such as age, race, sexual orientation, sex, ethnicity, gender identity, religion, disability, etc.

Vaccination requirements are not discriminatory in Manitoba or Canada. Public health laws may restrict our freedoms, but are temporary and with justification behind them, are not venturing into the realm of discrimination.

**Q: What if I don't want to be vaccinated because it's my body, and my choice?**

A: Many public servants are public facing employees who directly serve the public. As such, many are at a higher risk of contracting or transmitting COVID-19, starting transmission chains that will affect those at greater risk.

While people do have the right to choose not to get vaccinated, they also have a professional and personal responsibility to help protect public health. If they refuse to be vaccinated, they will have to undergo regular COVID-19 testing to help mitigate the risk.

**Q: If the province can mandate vaccinations for public sector employees, then why not mandate it for everyone as a province-wide public health order?**

A: Beginning with the public service is a good starting point for us. However, as more data and information becomes available, we'll look at it to see if we need to make further adjustments.

**Q: What if a public servant refuses to get tested for COVID-19? Will they be fired from their job?**

A: As we noted, more detailed work is underway on the public health order and on the guidance to support it. We'll be sharing more details in the weeks ahead.

**Q: What if a public servant is on leave? Will they need to get vaccinated before they return to work?**

A: As we noted, more detailed work is underway on the public health order and on the guidance to support it. We'll be sharing more details in the weeks ahead.

**Q: Why is government doing this now?**

A: For many months, there was a limited supply of the vaccine. Once more vaccine arrived, there was very good uptake.

But now, the delta variant is changing things. This pandemic is quickly becoming one of the unvaccinated. We want to make sure as many people as possible, particularly those under 12 who may not yet be able to get vaccinated, are protected. This is a step we can take to make this happen.