

CIRCULAR

Date: **August 24, 2021**

CIRCULAR NUMBER: COVID-19 2021-46

To: Community Living disABILITY Services – staff and service providers
Children’s disABILITY Services – staff and service providers
Child and Family Services – staff and service providers
Community Service Delivery - staff
Early Learning and Child Care – staff and service providers
Employment and Income Assistance/Provincial Services - staff
Family Violence Prevention Program – staff and service providers
Social Housing – staff and service providers
Homelessness – staff and service providers

Subject: Immunization and Testing Requirements

Type: Policy

Procedure

Effective Date: **Immediately**

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the department of Families has prioritized providing services in a manner that ensures the continued health and safety of the individuals we support. We have strongly encouraged all front-line service delivery and program area staff, who regularly work with the public, to be vaccinated. To continue protecting the health and safety of all Manitobans, the Manitoba government is taking additional steps to ensure the safety and protection of frontline workers and the individuals they serve.

The department recently issued a communication advising that the requirement for staff to be vaccinated would remain at the discretion of the employer but the issue was being actively explored by public health and direction would be confirmed. Following consultations with public health, the government announced August 24, 2021 that new public health orders will require frontline public service employees to be fully vaccinated ([Province of Manitoba | News Releases | Manitoba Will Require COVID-19 Vaccinations or Testing for Designated Government Employees](#))

In response, workers in designated positions **are required to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 by no later than October 31, 2021 or submit to regular testing.** The employees will be required to be fully immunized with two doses of COVID-19 vaccine by October 31 which means individuals must receive their first dose on or

before September 7, 2021, and their second dose on or before October 17, 2021. Tests must be done by an approved diagnostic testing provider and, according to protocols determined by Manitoba public health officials, provide proof of negative test results.

The following positions are subject to the vaccination or testing requirements:

- 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
 - All staff and practicum students working in licensed early learning and child care facilities, and individuals or organizations providing services on behalf of a licensed child care facility who are paid or unpaid.
- Health care workers
 - All health care workers, including, staff, physicians, students, contractors and volunteers employed by or working in areas of direct patient/resident/client care in a public or private health care setting, including hospitals, licensed long term care, community and home care.
 - Direct care providers are defined as all providers that come into contact with patients/residents/clients, patient care environments, patient care equipment and blood and body fluids. This includes, but is not limited to physicians, nurses, allied health professionals, support services and others deemed appropriate for each site/area/program.
- Frontline Public Sector Employees and Funded Agency Employees

Other frontline public sector or provincially funded agency employees and broader public sector employees in high-risk settings with direct, ongoing contact with the public/clients. This includes, but is not limited to public servants who work in high-risk settings, such as congregate/residential facilities or group homes; work with vulnerable populations including children; and/or are required to enter the residence of a client/patient; and Justice and Corrections.

For the department of Families, this includes frontline employees of the department and provincially funded agencies in the following sectors:

- Child and Family Services
- Children's disABILITY Services
- Community Living disABILITY Services
- Employment and Income Assistance and Provincial Services
- Early Learning and Child Care
- Family Violence Prevention Program
- Homelessness
- Social Housing including affordable, cooperative and companies who provide property management for social housing

More information about how agencies and organizations will be supported to implement the vaccination or testing requirements, as well as how these requirements will impact the reopening of services, will be provided in the coming weeks.

Mandating vaccines for certain sectors is a pre-emptive measure to help protect all Manitobans as we prepare for a fourth wave of COVID-19. The designated groups in this policy were chosen due to their public-facing work that often involves contact with vulnerable populations.

The new policy does not require vaccination as a condition of employment – employees may choose to be fully vaccinated and show proof of that vaccination, or they may choose to undergo frequent COVID testing. 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 someone chooses not to receive the vaccine, they will be subject to COVID testing up to three times a week and will need to provide proof of a negative test before resuming work.

Thank you for your ongoing commitment to protecting the health and safety of the individuals we serve, and for ensuring safe working environments for your staff.

Sincerely,

Kathryn Gerrard
Deputy Minister
Department of Families

Christy Holnbeck
Assistant Deputy Minister
Child and Youth Services

Catherine Gates
Assistant Deputy Minister
Community Service Delivery

Heidi Wurmman
Assistant Deputy Minister
Corporate Services

Joseph Bradbury
Chief Executive Officer
Manitoba Housing