



## COVID-19 Vaccinations – Teaching Service and School Council Employees Policy

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### Scope

#### **Relevant employees**

This policy applies to all Teaching Service and school council employees (relevant employees).

#### **Department education facilities**

This policy provides information about relevant employees that attend registered schools provided by the Victorian Government (Victorian government schools).

### Requirements for relevant employees

To comply with vaccination directions, relevant employees must:

- receive their first dose of an approved COVID-19 vaccination by 18 October 2021 or show evidence of an appointment to receive their first dose by 25 October 2021
- receive their second dose of an approved COVID-19 vaccination by 29 November 2021
- provide information to the Department through eduPay, confirming their vaccination status and date of vaccination (or evidence of an appointment to receive a first dose by 25 October) by 18 October 2021. If a relevant employee shows that they have an appointment to receive a first dose by 25 October, once the first dose has been received, the employee must confirm and provide evidence of the dose being received, as well as evidence of a booking to receive a second dose by 29 November 2021. For more information about accepted information refer to the topic below: What is vaccination information?

### Requirements for schools and the Department

To comply with vaccination directions relating to relevant employees, the Department and schools must:

- notify relevant employees about the requirement for the Department to collect, record and hold vaccination information, and that education facilities are required to take reasonable steps to ensure that unvaccinated workers do not attend the facility. The Department has notified relevant employees directly through a central communication.
- collect, record and hold vaccination information about relevant employees. Vaccination information for relevant employees will be collected centrally through

eduPay. Principals/managers will not be able to see vaccination information in eduPay. The Department will provide principals with a regularly updated report about employees who are not able to attend school sites to perform work, as required to comply with vaccination directions.

- take reasonable steps to prevent an unvaccinated relevant employee from attending the education facility to work, unless an exception applies. The Department will communicate directly with unvaccinated relevant employees to advise them they are not permitted to attend their workplace to work. Schools will also need to take reasonable steps to ensure that unvaccinated relevant employees do not attend school sites to work.

### **Ensuring unvaccinated relevant employees do not attend school sites to work**

In situations where an unvaccinated employee (teaching service or school council employee) attends or refuses to leave a school site principals should:

- clearly direct the staff member to leave the school grounds immediately due to the need to protect the health and safety of students and staff at the school and refer the staff member to the information that the Department has provided to all staff
- immediately notify the Region and report the incident to the Department's Incident Support and Operations Centre (ISOC) on 1800 126 126 and
- if the staff member is becoming aggressive or refuses to leave the school grounds the principal should direct students away from the area and immediately call Victoria Police to seek their assistance to remove the staff member from school grounds.

Follow up the matter by:

- writing to the employee to clearly explain that the worker has no permission to attend the school site
- Contact the Employee Conduct Branch for advice
- Seek wellbeing supports for any impacted employees or students who witnessed or were involved in the exchange.

A relevant employee attending a school site as a parent or carer for the purposes of collecting or dropping off children is not considered to be attending for work purposes and will be subject to the same requirements as all other parents collecting or dropping off their children, refer to: [School Operations Guide](#) (Word) (staff login required).

Required vaccination information

### **What is vaccination information?**

Under the vaccination directions, vaccination information is information about a person's vaccination status including whether they are fully vaccinated, partially vaccinated, medically excepted or unvaccinated. Vaccination information includes information that is derived from a record of information that was made under, or in accordance with, the Australian Immunisation Register Act 2015 (Cth) and can be shown in documents such as:

- a letter from a medical practitioner confirming the person's vaccination status or confirming the person is medically excepted
- a certificate of immunisation (for example, a COVID-19 digital certificate)
- an immunisation history statement obtained from the Australian Immunisation Register.

Only certain medical practitioners can provide a letter. For more information, refer to the following topic below: Who is a medical practitioner?

You can access your Immunisation History Statement and COVID-19 digital certificate:

- online, by setting up your own [myGov](#) account and then accessing your [Medicare online account](#)
- through the [Express Plus Medicare](#) mobile app.

Other options to access your Immunisation History Statement include:

- calling the Australian Immunisation Register enquiries line on [1800 653 809](#) (8 am to 5 pm, Monday to Friday AEST) and asking them to send your statement to you – please allow up to 14 days to receive your statement in the post
- asking your doctor or vaccination provider to print a copy of your statement for you.

You do not need to have a Medicare card to be able to access your Immunisation History Statement.

The Department will verify that vaccination information provided by relevant employees meets the requirements of the vaccination directions.

### **What is vaccination information used for?**

Your health information, including vaccination information, is collected, recorded, stored and used in accordance with the Health Records Act 2001 (Vic) and the Public Records Act 1973 (Vic).



Vaccination information collected about a relevant employee will be used for the purpose of complying with vaccination directions, and will only be provided to people who require the information to support compliance with the vaccination directions.

For more information on how vaccination will be handled, please refer to the [data collection statement](#) (staff login required).

#### Effect of vaccination directions

From 18 October 2021, unless they have a valid medical exception, relevant employees will not be permitted to attend a school if:

- they have not received any COVID-19 vaccine doses and have not made an appointment to receive a dose before 25 October 2021
- they have not provided information regarding their vaccination status as set out above, including if they have not provided evidence that a medical exception applies.

From 29 November 2021, any relevant employee who has not received a medical exception certificate from their doctor and has not received a second dose of COVID-19 vaccine and/or has not provided vaccination information, will not be permitted to attend a school.

Some very limited exceptions to attendance at school sites by unvaccinated relevant employees may apply in emergency situations. For more information refer to the following topic below: Exceptional circumstances.

#### **Medically 'excepted persons'**

In line with vaccination directions, relevant employees may be able to show that they are an 'excepted person'.

From 18 October 2021, relevant employees who are considered 'excepted persons' under the vaccination directions can resume or continue face-to-face duties.

This is a very limited category and applies only if the person has a certificate from an authorised medical practitioner showing that they are unable to receive a dose, or a further dose, of an approved COVID-19 vaccine due to a 'medical contraindication' or an acute medical illness (including COVID-19).

A medical contraindication must be one of the following issues related to the administration of an approved COVID-19 vaccine:

- anaphylaxis after a previous dose

- anaphylaxis to any component of the vaccine, including polysorbate or polyethylene glycol
- in relation to AstraZeneca:
  - history of capillary leak syndrome or
  - thrombosis with thrombocytopenia occurring after a previous dose
- in relation to Comirnaty (Pfizer) or Spikevax (Moderna):
  - myocarditis or pericarditis attributed to a previous dose of either Comirnaty or Spikevax or
- the occurrence of any other serious adverse event that has been:
  - attributed to a previous dose of a COVID-19 vaccine by an experienced immunisation provider or medical specialist (and not attributed to any other identifiable cause)
  - reported to state adverse event programs and/or the Therapeutic Goods Administration.

### Who is a medical practitioner?

A medical practitioner, for the purpose of the vaccination directions, is limited to the following types of practitioners:

- a general practice registrar on an approved 3GA training placement
- a public health physician
- a general physician
- an infectious disease physician
- a clinical immunologist
- a gynaecologist
- an obstetrician
- a general practitioner who is vocationally registered
- a general practitioner who is a fellow of the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP)
- a general practitioner who is a fellow of the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine (ACRRM).

This means that only medical practitioners from the list above can provide vaccination information including a letter showing evidence of vaccination or certification that a person is an excepted person under the prescribed criteria.

The Department will verify that vaccination information provided by relevant employees meets the requirements of the vaccination directions and provide advice to schools.

### Exceptional circumstances

There are very limited exceptions to the vaccination directions, and in most cases these will not apply in school settings. An unvaccinated relevant employee may be able to attend a school to:

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- respond to an emergency at the facility
- fill a vacancy to provide urgent care, to maintain quality of care and/or continue essential operations at the facility due to an emergency situation or a critical unforeseen circumstance. The school must take all reasonable steps to ensure that the person is wearing PPE including a surgical mask and face shield.

These exceptions only apply for the time required to respond to the emergency or critical unforeseen circumstance, and the school should ensure that the unvaccinated relevant employee leaves the facility as soon as possible.

Schools should exhaust all other options before calling on an unvaccinated relevant employee to respond to an emergency situation. This includes:

- normal procedures for ensuring continuity of care such as engaging casual relief teachers
- following the Department's policy on [Reporting and Managing School Incidents](#) to access area-based support. This includes consulting with Regional Emergency Management staff and the relevant school education improvement leader (SEIL) prior to engaging an unvaccinated relevant employee.

If an unvaccinated relevant employee attends a school to respond to an emergency situation, the principal should provide this information when reporting the emergency to the Department's ISOC on [1800 126 126](#), as well as to the relevant SEIL.

Result of non-compliance with this policy

### **Unvaccinated relevant employees**

If a relevant employee does not comply with vaccination requirements they will be informed by the Department that they must not attend the school premises.

Between 18 October and 17 December 2021 (end of Term 4), relevant employees who do not meet the vaccination requirements will not be able to attend work onsite and will not be assigned alternative duties in place of onsite duties. During this period, any such employees will be able to access existing leave entitlements in accordance with the relevant leave policies. From 18 December 2021 until 27 January 2022, normal school holiday provisions will apply.

From 28 January 2022 (beginning Term 1), paid and unpaid leave entitlements will not be available to any relevant employees who do not meet the vaccination requirements, and any further absence will be considered in line with the Department's [Absent Without Leave](#) policy, which may result in cessation of employment. This will occur automatically under provisions in the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic) and/or relevant Ministerial Orders.

## Medically excepted relevant employees

Relevant employees who are unable to receive an approved COVID-19 vaccine due to a genuine medical exception are able to perform onsite duties. Where medically excepted relevant employees do not attend for onsite duties due to concerns about COVID-19, principals should:

- work through concerns with individual employees, noting that the Department's policy aims to provide a safe workplace for all employees, including those who cannot receive a COVID-19 vaccination, by complying with mandatory vaccination directions set by the Chief Health Officer
- until the end of Term 4 2021, consider whether there are suitable alternative duties that can be performed by the medically excepted employee case by case. Where there are no suitable alternative duties, request that the relevant employee takes paid or unpaid leave.

From Term 1 2022, where a medically excepted relevant employee continues to be absent from the workplace, a further assessment may be required to determine whether the employee is able to fulfil the inherent requirements of their role.

Other information for staff

## Assistance in accessing vaccinations

School staff can access up to half a day's paid release from duty to attend COVID-19 vaccine appointments. Schools are asked to exercise maximum flexibility in enabling employees to make and attend vaccination appointments.

Employees are requested to make appointments that occur in Term 4 at times that minimise disruption to the educational program of the school and support for students.

For more information, refer to: [Release from duty to attend COVID-19 vaccinations](#) (staff login required)

## Where can I find out more information about vaccinations?

To find out more information about COVID-19 vaccines, employees are encouraged to speak with their medical practitioner.

General information about vaccinations is available at the Victorian Government's COVID-19 website, refer to: [About COVID-19 vaccines](#).

Employees can also call the Department's COVID-19 hotline on [1800 338 663](#). The hotline operates from 8:30 am to 5 pm Monday to Friday, and 10 am to 3 pm Saturday and Sunday, excluding public holidays.

## Support for mental health and wellbeing

If staff are experiencing stress, anxiety or other impacts on their mental health in relation to the requirements, they can access confidential counselling support through the Employee Assistance Program, available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, through LifeWorks on [1300 361 008](tel:1300361008). More information is available at [COVID-19 employee health, safety and wellbeing supports for schools](#).

### Review/grievance

As noted above, vaccination requirements are a condition of employment in accordance with directions issued by the Victorian Chief Health Officer, refer to: [Directions issued by Victoria's Chief Health Officer](#).

There is no mechanism for decisions made by the Victorian Chief Health Officer to be reviewed by the Department.

Where a relevant employee has a concern about how this policy has been applied in their specific circumstances, they are encouraged to discuss this with their line manager in the first instance.

Further information about the Department's grievance and dispute resolution processes is available on HRWeb, refer to: [Grievances](#).

### Contact

For more information contact Schools People Services on [1800 641 943](tel:1800641943).

### Related topics

- [Absent Without Leave – Unauthorised Absences](#)
- [Annual Leave – Teaching Service](#)
- [COVID-19 Vaccinations – Visitors and Volunteers in Schools](#)
- [Leave Without Pay – Teaching Service](#)
- [Long Service Leave – Teaching Service](#)

*This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's three year review cycle.  
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