

FAQS – Mandatory COVID-19 Vaccine Policy

The Regional Health Authorities (RHAs) are committed to maintaining safe workplaces for everyone. To ensure continued safety in our workplaces, as well as, to ensure the additional health protection for all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, all RHA employees are required to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 or have an approved exemption.

Definitions:

Fully Vaccinated

A person is fully vaccinated when at least two weeks have passed since an individual's second dose of a two dose COVID-19 vaccine or first dose where an individual has received a one-dose COVID-19 vaccine.

Questions

1. What is the Mandatory Vaccination Policy?

On Oct 15, 2021, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador provided details of its Mandatory Vaccination Policy that applies to public service employees. The policy is being implemented in an effort to ensure continued safety in the workplace, as well as to ensure additional health protection for all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

The four RHAs are enacting a Mandatory Vaccination Policy in line with the province's policy, which can be found here:

<https://www.gov.nl.ca/exec/tbs/mandatory-vaccination-policy/>

2. Who does this policy apply to?

The Policy applies to employees (regardless of physical work location or work arrangements), physicians (including fee for service physicians), locums, clergy, volunteers, students, vendors, contractors, and suppliers.

3. When do I need to be compliant with the policy?

In order to be compliant with this policy by **December 17, 2021** (i.e. 11:59pm on December 16, 2021), employees will need to have received their first vaccination (for a two-dose regime) no later than **November 5, 2021** and their second vaccination no later than **December 3, 2021** for the 14-day window to meet full compliance or have an approved medical exemption.

4. What happens if I am not in compliance with the policy?

Employees who are not in compliance with this new policy will be put on unpaid leave beginning on December 17, 2021 (more information to follow). Employees placed on unpaid leave will not be entitled to use any existing leave banks, including sick, earned leave, etc.

5. If I become fully vaccinated after December 17, 2021, does my unpaid leave end?

The unpaid leave will end, and the employee can return to work once considered fully vaccinated or once an exemption has been approved.

6. Can I be exempt from this policy?

A person who chooses not to get vaccinated because of a personal choice or belief, is not protected under the Human Rights Act.

The RHAs will consider valid requests for exemptions. At present, very limited medical conditions have been identified as acceptable exemptions to this policy (see Q7). More information can be found here: <https://thinkhumanrights.ca/human-rights-and-covid-19-best-practices/>

7. How do I seek a medical exemption?

To receive a medical exemption, you must visit a physician or nurse practitioner who will confirm whether you meet the approved criteria for a medical exemption. Medical documentation must be in accordance with the guidance from the College of Physicians and Surgeons NL. For more information, please visit: <https://cpsnl.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/2021-09-09-Medical-Exemptions-for-COVID-19-Vaccinations.pdf>

8. How do I provide proof of my vaccination/exemption to my employer?

The RHAs are currently working on a process for employees, physicians, locums, clergy, and volunteers to provide information to allow Human Resources to verify your vaccination status. Further communication regarding this process will be available soon.

Students working within the RHAs will be subject to this policy and will be required to follow their educational institution's process for verifying vaccination status.