

Department of Health and Social  
Services

Updated COVID-19 Vaccination  
Guidelines

*November 7, 2021*

## PURPOSE

The Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) COVID-19 Vaccination Guidelines have been developed to provide direction and information to supervisors and employees about the implementation of the Amended Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) COVID-19 Vaccination Policy (Policy) by the DHSS. They are also intended to provide employees with the information necessary to arrange for vaccination, if necessary, and to obtain proof of vaccination documentation ahead of the November 30, 2021 implementation date.

Amendments to the Policy have been made to ensure that the GNWT follows evolving best practice standards in management of the COVID-19 pandemic in order to protect employees and members of the public. DHSS Guidelines will be updated as required.

## POLICY BASE

These Guidelines are consistent with and support the implementation of the Amended GNWT COVID-19 Vaccination Policy and the Amended Corporate COVID-19 Vaccination Policy Guidelines.

## SCOPE

The Policy concerns vaccination against COVID-19, or Coronavirus disease, an infectious respiratory illness caused by Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), and the implementation of other workplace safety precautions in lieu of vaccination.

This Policy and the present Guidelines apply to all employees of the DHSS and all persons engaged to provide services on behalf of the DHSS.

## DEFINITIONS

The following terms apply in these Guidelines:

COVID-19 – or Coronavirus disease is an infectious respiratory illness caused by a newly discovered coronavirus, Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2).

Deputy Head – the Deputy Minister of DHSS, the Chief Executive Officer of a public committee, board or council, or such a person as may be appointed or designated as Deputy Head.

Employees – means all members of the public service as defined by the *Public Service Act*.

Contractors – means all persons engaged to provide services with or without remuneration on behalf of the GNWT.

Fully Vaccinated – for the purposes of the Policy, a person is considered Fully Vaccinated 14 days after receiving the final dose of a Health Canada authorized COVID-19 vaccine or an approved combination of Health Canada authorized vaccines.

## GUIDELINES

### General

The DHSS is committed to ensuring a safe environment for Employees, Contractors and members of the public.

All DHSS Employees are required to be Fully Vaccinated by November 30, 2021, or will be required to wear DHSS designated Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and comply with DHSS COVID-19 testing protocols.

### Submitting Proof of Vaccination

Employees must provide documentation setting out their proof of vaccination on or before November 30, 2021.

#### *Acceptable Proof of Vaccination*

Acceptable proof of vaccination documentation must be an official record from the public health office in the jurisdiction(s) where the Employee received the vaccine dose(s) and must include the following information:

- i. The issuing authority of the vaccination record;
- ii. The Employee's full name;
- iii. The name/brand of the vaccine(s) received; and
- iv. The date(s) of vaccination.

Employees will submit their proof of vaccination using the Human Resources Information System (HRIS). Instructions for submitting proof of vaccination through HRIS are available on the MyHR website.

DHSS employees who require assistance with submitting their proof of vaccination should speak with their supervisor so that arrangements can be made prior to November 30, 2021.

The Human Resources Branch of the Department of Finance is responsible for securing personal information submitted by Department of Health and Social Services Employees in accordance with the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (ATIPPA) and for verification of Employee vaccination information.

Upon submission of the Employee's proof of vaccination documents, the information will be verified and the Employee's direct supervisor will be notified that the Employee has submitted proof of vaccination.

The information verified will be:

- i. The issuing authority of the vaccination record;
- ii. The Employee's full name;
- iii. The name/brand of the vaccine(s) received; and
- iv. The date(s) of vaccination.

All proof of vaccination documents will be securely stored in the HRIS system.

The Employee's direct supervisor may maintain a record of which employees have provided proof of vaccination for the purpose of enforcing PPE use and COVID-19 testing protocols under the Policy.

### **Use of and Access to Employee Information**

Employee vaccination status information may only be accessed as necessary for implementation of the Policy.

In the event of any unauthorized access to an Employee's vaccination status information, the Employee will be immediately advised of the breach and circumstances relating to that breach. The GNWT will follow the appropriate steps set out in the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act* to review and report the privacy breach

Employees may access their vaccination status information through HRIS.

### **Other Measures to protect the safety of employees and members of the public**

Employees who do not provide proof of full vaccination by November 30, 2021, will be required to wear DHSS designated Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) in accordance with its Exposure Control Plan at all times in the workplace and to comply with COVID-19 testing protocols as directed by the DHSS until they provide proof of vaccination.

DHSS Employees who refuse to wear PPE or participate in testing protocols as directed by the DHSS will be required to take a leave without pay until they do so.

#### ***Personal Protective Equipment***

Employees who have not provided proof of vaccination will be required to wear a GNWT authorized face mask while completing their duties. These Employees may also be required to wear other PPE, as designated by DHSS, depending on the Employees' duties, level of contact with colleagues and members of the public, and other hazard control measures in place. This arrangement will be determined on an individual basis with supervisors.

***Providing proof of vaccination does not release Employees from use of PPE or adherence to COVID-19 testing protocols such as those set out in Chief Public Health Officer orders, Public Health Advisories, or protocols contained within the DHSS Exposure Control Plans.***

## *COVID-19*

## *Testing*

Regular testing for COVID-19 may be required within 48 hours or 72 hours of attendance at a GNWT worksite for all Employees who do not provide proof of vaccination. Those Employees will be required to provide proof of a negative test result produced within the preceding 48 hours or 72 hours before resuming work or attending at a GNWT worksite, or as otherwise directed by their supervisor.

COVID-19 testing of Employees who have not provided proof of vaccination will be conducted as directed.

- Upon confirmation of a negative COVID-19 Test result, the Employee will be allowed to report to work wearing the required PPE.
- In the event of a positive COVID-19 test, the Employee will immediately begin self-isolating. The Employee will be required to follow all Office of the Chief Public Health Officer requirements in effect at the time of the positive test and may only return to work once allowed to do so by Public Health.

The schedule of Employee testing will be set with regard to the work schedule of the Employee to ensure that there is an appropriate nexus of time between a negative test result and the Employee performing their duties.

## *Duty Travel*

Duty travel may require DHSS Employees to be fully vaccinated and to have submitted proof of vaccination. Use of PPE and testing for COVID-19 in lieu of vaccination may not be permitted.

Where permitted, Employees who have not provided proof of vaccination shall wear DHSS designated PPE for the duration of all duty travel, except at times when they are alone in their travel accommodations or while dining. This includes travel time to and from Duty Travel destinations.

Employees will be required to have their own accommodations while on Duty Travel.

## Accommodations

Accommodations will be made for Employees who are both unable to be vaccinated and unable to wear mandatory PPE or undergo regular testing for verified medical reasons or based on protected grounds under the *Human Rights Act*.

Employees seeking accommodation are subject to the *Duty to Accommodate Injury and Disability Policy* and the *Duty to Accommodate Policy Application Guidelines*.

Employees requesting accommodation due to a medical or human rights exemption to COVID-19 vaccination must inform their supervisor before November 30, 2021, or as soon as is practicable.

### *Documentation Required for Medical Exemptions*

The Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority, Hay River Health and Social Services Authority and Tlicho Community Services Agency released an Approach to Requests for Exemption from COVID-19 guideline, which provides guidance to support NWT healthcare providers in a consistent and evidence-based approach to vaccine exemption requests.

Employees requesting an accommodation due to a medical exemption to vaccination will be required to provide to their supervisor a letter from a physician or nurse practitioner or other certified proof of medical exemption from a physician or nurse practitioner in order to claim medical exemption status.

## EMPLOYEE AND EMPLOYER RESPONSIBILITIES

### Responsibilities of the Employee

- All Employees are expected to self-monitor for COVID-19 symptoms before coming to the worksite.
- Any Employee, regardless of vaccination status, who develops symptoms of COVID-19 should refrain from attending at their workplace and should promptly advise their direct supervisor.
- All Employees are expected to follow all Office of the Chief Public Health Officer (OCPHO) and Public Health orders.
- All Employees are responsible for obtaining copies of their vaccination records.
- All Employees must provide proof of full vaccination on or before November 30, 2021.

- Employees who will not provide proof of vaccination by November 30, 2021, should inform their direct supervisor at the earliest possible date so that arrangements can be made for provision of PPE and institution of a testing schedule, or so that other accommodations can be made, where applicable.
- Employees are responsible for complying with all PPE and testing protocols as directed.

### Responsibilities of the Employer

- The Department of Health and Social Services is responsible for providing the Policy and Guidelines to all incumbents of all positions with the Department.
- The Department of Health and Social Services is responsible for ensuring that all required PPE is provided to Employees required to wear PPE while performing their duties.
- The Department of Health and Social Services will provide information about COVID-19 vaccination to all Employees and ensure that unvaccinated Employees who wish to receive COVID-19 vaccination are granted the opportunity to do so. Materials and information about COVID-19 vaccination can be found on the [GNWT's Response to COVID-19](#) website.
- Department of Health and Social Services hiring managers will include details about the GNWT COVID-19 Vaccination Policy and the Department of Health and Social Services Guidelines in all job postings.
- The Department of Health and Social Services will ensure that all Department of Health and Social Services workplaces follow GNWT Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) standards for COVID-19 safety within the workplace.

## LEGISLATIVE AND OTHER RELATED AUTHORITY

The Policy, GNWT Corporate Guidelines and the Department of Health and Social Services Guidelines are issued under the authority of the Financial Management Board. The *Public Service Act* and Regulations, and all relevant policies, and the terms and conditions of employment continue to apply.

The Policy, GNWT Corporate Guidelines, and Department of Health and Social Services Guidelines are drafted and will be implemented in adherence to the *Access to Information Protection of Privacy Act*, the *Safety Act*, the *Human Rights Act*, and any other legislation, regulations, and policies referenced within the Policy, GNWT Corporate Guidelines, and Department of Health and Social Services Guidelines or applicable to the Policy

All Department of Health and Social Services Employees will agree to abide by all government and department policies, collective agreements, procedures and legislation, including but not limited to the confidentiality of clients, department information and documentation.

Nothing in the Department of Health and Social Services Guidelines shall in any way be construed to limit the prerogative of the Minister or Deputy Minister of the the Department of Health and Social Services to make decisions or take action with respect to the Department of Health and Social Services Guidelines.